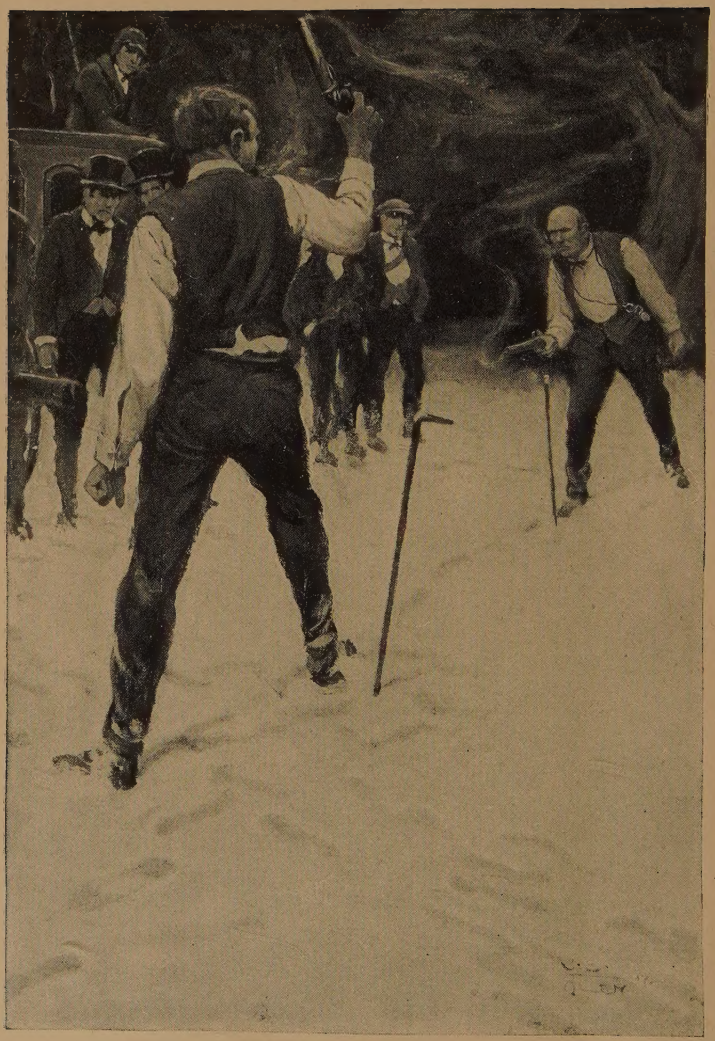

THEY HAD BOTH FIRED. IT WAS OVER.

Inclusive Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
Guy de Maupassant

BEL-AMI
THE CONFESSION
and other stories

Translations, Critical and Interpretative Essays by

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FRONTISPIECES BY J. E. ALLEN

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CONTENTS

BEL AMI

		PAGE
Chapter 1.	A Lean Pocket	1
2.	An Important Dinner Party	18
3.	The First Step	35
4.	Lessons in Journalism	56
5.	The First Affair	71
6.	A Long Step Forward	102
7.	A Means to an End	125
8.	DuRoy Proposes	141
9.	A Wedding	159
10.	Suspicion	179
11.	Enter Madame Walter	189
12.	A Fresh Conquest	204
13.	A Secret of Diplomacy	215
14.	A Testimony of Regard	229
15.	Little Susan Comes Forward	241
16.	In Flagrante Delictu	258
17.	The Last Plot	267
18.	He Laughs Who Wins	279

SHORT STORIES

Mademoiselle Pearl	289
In the Sunlight	312
The Confession	467
The Piece of String	474
The Mother of Monsters	484
Francesca and Carlotta Rondoli	491

BEL-AMI

CHAPTER I

A LEAN POCKET

WHEN the cashier had given him the change out of his five-franc piece, George Duroy left the restaurant.

As he had a good carriage, by nature as well as from his military training, he drew himself up, twirled his mustache, and threw upon the lingering customers a rapid and sweeping glance—one of those glances which take in everything within their range like a cast net.

The women looked up at him in turn—three little work-girls, a middle-aged music mistress, dishevelled, untidy, and wearing a bonnet always dusty and a dress always awry, and two shopkeepers' wives dining with their husbands—all regular customers at this popular-price establishment.

When he was on the sidewalk, he stood still a moment, asking himself what he should do. It was the 28th of June, and he had just three francs

forty centimes in his pocket to carry him to the end of the month. This meant the option of two dinners without luncheon or two luncheons without dinner. He reflected that as the earlier repasts cost twenty sous apiece, and the latter thirty, he would, if he were content with the luncheons, be one franc twenty centimes to the good, which would further represent two repasts of bread and sausage and two " bocks " on the boulevard. This latter item was his greatest extravagance and his chief pleasure of a night; and he began to descend the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette.

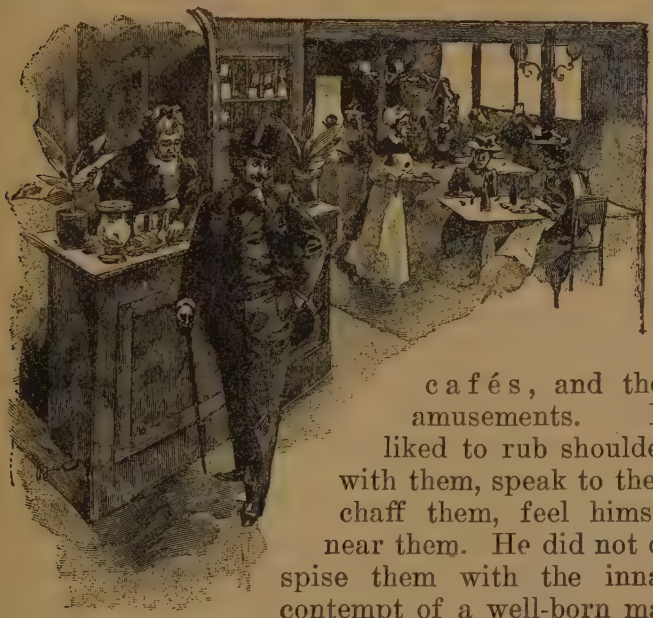
He walked as in the days when he had worn a hussar uniform, his chest thrown out and his legs slightly apart, as if he had just left the saddle, pushing his way through the crowded street, and shouldering people to avoid having to step aside. He wore his somewhat shabby hat slightly on one side, and brought his heels smartly down on the pavement. He seemed ever ready to defy somebody or something, the passers-by, the houses, the whole city, retaining all the swagger of a dashing soldier reduced to the rank of a civilian.

Although wearing a sixty-franc suit, he was not devoid of a certain somewhat loud though real air of fashion. Tall, well built, fair, with a curly mustache twisted up at the ends, bright blue eyes with small pupils, and reddish-brown hair curling naturally and parted in the middle, he bore a strong resemblance to the dare-devil of popular romances.

When George Duroy reached the boulevard he paused again, undecided as to what he should do. He now thought of going on to the Champs Elysées and the Avenue du Bois Boulogne to seek a little fresh air under the trees, but another wish tormented him, the desire for a love affair.

What shape would it take? He did not know, but he had been waiting it for three months, night and day. Occasionally, thanks to his good looks and gallant bearing, he gleaned a few crumbs of love here and there, but he was always hoping for something further and better.

He liked, however, the localities frequented by the lower class of women; he liked their balls, their



cafés, and their amusements. He liked to rub shoulders with them, speak to them, chaff them, feel himself near them. He did not despise them with the innate contempt of a well-born man.

He turned toward the Madeleine, following the stream of people which moved along, overcome by the heat. The larger cafés, filled with customers, were overflowing on to the pavement, and displayed their drinking public under the dazzling glare of their street lamps. Duroy had slackened his pace; an intense thirst parched his throat.

A hot thirst, a summer evening's thirst, had

taken possession of him, and he imagined the delightful sensation of cool drinks flowing into his mouth. But if he drank only two bocks in the evening, farewell to the slender supper of the morrow, and he was only too well acquainted with periods of short commons at the end of the month.

He said to himself: "I must hold out till ten o'clock, and then I'll have my bock at the American café. Confound it, how thirsty I am, though." And he glanced at the men seated at the tables drinking, all the people who could quench their thirst as they pleased. He went on, passing in front of the cafés with a sprightly, swaggering air, guessing at a glance from their dress and bearing how much money each customer ought to have about him. The sight of these men quietly sitting there filled him with wrath. If their pockets were searched, gold, silver, and coppers would be found in them. On an average, each one must have at least two louis. There were certainly a hundred in the café; a hundred times two louis is four thousand francs. He murmured, "The swine," as he walked, swaggering, past them. If he could have got hold of one of them at a nice dark street corner he would have twisted his neck without scruple, as he did the country folk's fowls on field-days.

And he recalled his two years in Africa and the way in which he robbed the Arabs when stationed at little outposts in the South. A bright and cruel smile flitted across his lips at the recollection of an escapade which had cost the lives of three men of the Ouled-Alane tribe, and had furnished him and his comrades with a score of fowls, a couple of sheep, some gold, and food for laughter for six months.

The culprits had never been found, and, what is

more, they had hardly been looked for, the Arab being looked upon somewhat as the natural prey of the soldier.

In Paris it was another thing. One could not plunder gracefully, sword by side and revolver in hand, far from civil authority and with impunity. He felt in his heart all the instincts of a non-commissioned officer let loose in a conquered country. He certainly regretted his two years in the desert. What a pity he had not stayed there! But, then, he had hoped for something better in returning home. And now—ah! yes, now he was getting it, was he not?

He clicked his tongue as if to verify the parched state of his palate.

The crowd swept past him slowly, and he kept thinking: "Set of hogs! All these idiots have money in their waistcoat pockets." He pushed against people and softly whistled a lively tune. Gentlemen whom he thus elbowed turned round grumbling; women murmured: "What a brute!"

He passed the Vaudeville Théâtre and stopped before the American café, asking himself whether he should not drink a bock, so greatly did this thirst torture him. Before making up his mind, he glanced at the illuminated clock. It was a quarter past nine. He knew himself; as soon as the glassful of beer was before him, he would gulp it down. What would he do then up to eleven o'clock?

He passed on. "I will go as far as the Madeleine," he said, "and walk back slowly."

As he reached the corner of the Place de l'Opéra, he passed a stout young fellow, whose face he vaguely recollected having seen somewhere. He began to follow him, turning over his recollections and

repeating to himself half aloud: "Where the deuce did I know that fellow?"

He searched without being able to recollect, and then all at once, by a strange trick of memory, the same man appeared to him thinner, younger, and clad in a hussar uniform. He exclaimed aloud: "Why, Forestier!" and stepping out he tapped the other on the shoulder. The promenader turned round and looked at him and then said: "What is it, sir?"

Duroy broke into a laugh. "Don't you know me?" said he.

"No."

"George Duroy, of the Sixth Hussars."

Forestier held out his hands, exclaiming: "Why, old fellow! How are you?"

"Very well, and you?"

"Oh, not very brilliant. Just imagine, I have a chest made of papier mâché just now. I cough six months out of twelve, in consequence of a cold I caught at Bougival the year of my return to Paris, four years ago."

And Forestier, taking his old comrade's arm, spoke to him of his illness, related the consultations, opinions, and advice of the doctors, and the difficulty of following this advice in his position. He was told to spend the winter in the South, but how could he? He was married, and was a journalist with a good position.

"I am political editor of the *Vie Française*. I write the proceedings in the Senate for the *Salut*, and from time to time literary criticisms for the *Planète*. So I have made my way."

Duroy looked at him with surprise. He was greatly changed, matured. He had now the manner, bearing, and dress of a man in a good position

and sure of himself, and the paunch of a man who dines well. Formerly he had been thin, slight, supple, heedless, brawling, noisy, and always ready for a spree. In three years, Paris had turned him into someone quite different, stout and serious, with some white hairs about his temples, though he was not more than twenty-seven.

Forestier asked: "Where are you going?"

Duroy answered: "Nowhere; I am just taking a stroll before turning in."

"Well, will you come with me to the *Vie Française,* where I have some proofs to correct, and then we will take a bock together?"

"All right."

They began to walk on, arm-in-arm, with that easy familiarity that exists between schoolmates and between men in the same regiment.

"What are you doing in Paris?" asked Forestier.

Duroy shrugged his shoulders. "Simply starving. As soon as I finished my term of service I came here—to make a fortune, or rather for the sake of living in Paris; and, for six months, I have been a clerk in the offices of the Northern Railway at fifteen hundred francs a year, no more."

Forestier murmured: "Hang it, that's not much!"

"I should think not. But how can I get out of it? I am alone; I don't know any one; I can get no introductions. It is not good will that is lacking, but means."

His comrade looked him over from head to foot, like a practical man examining a subject, and then said, in a tone of conviction: "You see, my boy, everything depends upon assurance here. A clever fellow can more easily become a minister than an

under-secretary. One must obtrude one's self on people; not ask things of them. But how the deuce is it that you could not get hold of anything better than a clerkship on the Northern Railway?"

Duroy replied: "I looked about everywhere, but could not find anything. But I have something in view just now: I have been offered a position as riding master at Pellerin's. There I shall get three thousand francs at the lowest."

Forestier stopped short. "Don't do that; it is stupid, when you ought to be earning ten thousand francs. You would nip your future in the bud. In your office, at any rate, you are hidden; no one knows you; you can get out of it, if you are strong enough, and make your own way. But once a riding master, and it is all over. It is as if you were head waiter at a place where all Paris goes to dine. When once you have given riding lessons to people in society or to their children, they will never be able to look upon you as an equal."

He remained silent for a few moments evidently reflecting, and then asked:

"Have you a bachelor's degree?"

"No; I failed twice."

"That is no matter as long as you studied for it. If any one mentions Cicero or Tiberius, you know pretty well what they are talking about?"

"Yes; pretty well."

"Good; no one knows any more, with the exception of a score of idiots who have taken the trouble. It is not difficult to pass as being well informed; the great thing is not to be caught in some blunder. You can manœuvre, avoid the difficulty, turn the tables, and floor others by means of a dictionary. Men are all as stupid as geese and ignorant as donkeys."

He spoke with the quiet self-possession of one

who knows life, and smiled as he watched the crowd go by. But all at once he began to cough, and stood still till the paroxysm was over, adding, in a tone of discouragement: "Isn't it terrible not to be able to get rid of this cough? And we are in the middle of summer. Oh, this winter I shall go and get cured at Mentone. Health before everything."

They halted on the Boulevard Poissonnière before a large glass door, on the inner side of which an open newspaper was pasted. Three passers-by had stopped and were reading it.

Above the door, in large letters of flame, outlined by gas jets, were the words *La Vie Française*.

Forestier pushed the door open, saying, "Come in." Duroy entered, ascended a handsome but dirty staircase visible from the street, passed through an anteroom where two messengers bowed to his companion, and reached a kind of waiting room, shabby and dusty, upholstered in dirty green Utrecht velvet, covered with spots and stains, and worn in places as if mice had gnawed it.

"Sit down," said Forestier, "I will be back in five minutes."

And he disappeared through one of the three doors opening into the room.

A strange, special, indescribable odor, the odor of a newspaper office, floated in the air of the room. Duroy remained motionless, slightly intimidated, above all, surprised. From time to time men passed hurriedly before him, coming in at one door and going out at another before he had time to look at them.

Others, too, arrived, serious, important-looking men, wearing tall hats with flat brims, as if this shape distingushed them from the rest of mankind.

Forestier reappeared holding the arm of a tall thin fellow, between thirty and forty years of age, in evening dress, very dark, with his mustache ends twirled into sharp points, and with an insolent, self-satisfied bearing.

Forestier said to him: "Good night, dear master!"

The other shook hands with him, saying: "Good night, my dear fellow," and went downstairs whistling, with his cane under his arm.

Duroy asked: "Who is that?"

"Jacques Rival, you know; the celebrated news editor, the duelist. He has just been correcting his proofs. Garin, Montel, and he are the three best news editors as regards intelligent setting forth of facts that we have in Paris. He gets thirty thousand francs a year here for two articles a week."

As they were leaving they met a short, stout man, with long hair and untidy appearance, who was puffing as he came up the stairs.

Forestier bowed low to him. "Norbert de Varenne," said he, "the poet; the author of '*Soleils Morts;*' another who gets big pay. Every story he writes for us costs three hundred francs, and the longest do not run two hundred lines. But let us turn into the Neapolitan café; I am beginning to choke with thirst."

As soon as they were seated at a table in the café, Forestier called for two bocks, and drank off his own at a single draught, while Duroy sipped his beer in slow mouthfuls, tasting and relishing it as if it were something rare and precious.

His companion was silent, and seemed to be reflecting. Suddenly he exclaimed: "Why don't you try journalism?"

The other looked at him with surprise, and then

said: "But, you know, I have never written anything."

"Bah; every one must begin. I could give you a job to hunt up information for me—to make calls and inquiries. You would have two hundred and fifty francs a month to start with, and your cab hire. Shall I speak to the manager about it?"

"Certainly!"

"Very well, then; come and dine with me to-morrow. I shall only have five or six people—the proprietor, Monsieur Walter and his wife; Jacques Rival, and Norbert de Varenne, whom you have just seen; and a lady, a friend of my wife. Is it settled?"

Duroy hesitated, blushing and perplexed. At length he murmured: "You see, I have no clothes."

Forestier was astounded. "You have no dress clothes? Hang it all, they are indispensable, though. In Paris one would be better off without a bed than without a dress suit."

Then, suddenly, feeling in his waistcoat pocket, he drew out some gold, took two louis, placed them in front of his old comrade, and said, in a cordial and familiar tone: "You will pay me back when you can. Hire the clothes you want or arrange to pay by installments, whichever you like, but come and dine with me to-morrow, half-past seven, number seventeen, Rue Fontaine."

Duroy, confused, picked up the money, stammering: "You are too good; I am very much obliged to you; you may be sure I shall not forget."

The other interrupted him. "All right. Another bock, eh? Waiter, two bocks."

Then, when they had drunk them, the journalist said: "Shall we stroll about a bit for an hour?"

"Certainly."

And they set out again in the direction of the Madeleine.

Duroy, rather perplexed, did not know what to say; at length he made up his mind. "I have never been in the Folies Bergère. I should not mind taking a look in there," he said.

"The Folies Bergère," exclaimed his companion; "the deuce, we shall roast there as in an oven. Well, all right, it is always amusing there."

And they turned their steps toward the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre.

The illuminated front of the establishment threw a bright light down the four streets which meet in front of it. A string of cabs were waiting for the close of the performance.

Forestier was walking in when Duroy stopped him.

"You are passing the box office," said he.

"I never pay," was the reply, in a tone of importance.

When he approached the doormen they bowed, and one of them held out his hand. The journalist asked: "Have you a good box?"

"Certainly, Monsieur Forestier."

He took the seat check held out to him, pushed the padded door with its leather borders, and they found themselves in the auditorium.

A cloud of tobacco smoke veiled like a faint mist the stage and the further side of the theatre.

The tall mirrors behind them reflected their backs and the faces of passers-by.

Forestier pushed his way through the groups, advancing quickly with the air of a man entitled to consideration.

He went up to an usher: "Box seventeen," said he.

"This way, sir."

And they were shut up in a little open box draped with red, and holding four chairs of the same color, so near to one another that one could scarcely slip in between them. The two friends sat down. To the right as to the left, following a long curved line the two ends of which joined the proscenium, a row of similar cribs held people seated in like fashion, with only their heads and chests visible.

On the stage, three young fellows in fleshings were executing feats in turn upon a trapeze.

Duroy scarcely noticed the performance, and with head averted, kept his eyes on the promenade behind him, full of men.

Said Forestier to him: "Look at the stalls; nothing but middle-class folks with their wives and children, good know-nothings who come here to see the show. In the boxes, men about town, some artists, some second-rate girls; and, behind us, the strangest mixture in Paris. Who are these men? Watch them. There are some of every kind, of every profession, and every caste; but blackguardism predominates. There are clerks of all kinds—bankers' clerks, government clerks, shopmen, reporters, pimps, officers in civilians' clothes, swells in evening dress, who have dined out, and who have dropped in here on their way from the Opéra to the Théâtre des Italiens; and then again, too, quite a crowd of suspicious folk who defy analysis. As to the women, only one type. We have known them for the last ten years; we see them every evening all the year round in the same places, except when they are making a sojourn at St. Lazare or at Lourcine."

Duroy no longer heard him. One of these women was leaning against their box and looking at him. She was a stout brunette, her skin whitened with

paint, her black eyes lengthened at the corners with pencil and shaded by enormous and artificial eyebrows; and her painted lips, red as a fresh wound, gave her a bestial, ardent, unnatural appearance.

She motioned with her head to one of her friends who was passing, a blonde with red hair, and stout,

like herself, and said to her, in a voice loud enough to be heard: "There is a pretty fellow!"

Forestier turned and tapped Duroy on the knee with a smile. "That is meant for you; you are a success, my dear fellow. I congratulate you."

The ex-officer blushed, and mechanically fingered the two pieces of gold in his waistcoat pockets.

The curtain had dropped, and the orchestra was now playing a waltz.

Duroy said: "Supposing we take a turn round the promenade."

"Just as you like."

They left their box, and were at once swept away by the stream of promenaders. Pushed, pressed, squeezed, jostled, they went on, having before their eyes a crowd of hats. The girls, in pairs, passed amidst this throng with facility, gliding between elbows and backs as if quite at home, perfectly at their ease, like fish in water, amidst this masculine flood.

Duroy, charmed, let himself be swept along, drinking in with intoxication the air vitiated by tobacco and the odor of humanity. But Forestier sweated, puffed, and coughed.

" Let us go into the garden," said he.

And, turning to the left, they entered a kind of covered garden, cooled by two large, ugly fountains. Men and women were drinking at zinc tables placed beneath evergreen trees growing in boxes.

" Another bock, eh? " said Forestier.

" Willingly."

They sat down and watched the passing throng.

But the stout brunette who just before had been leaning against the box occupied by the two comrades reappeared, walking proudly arm-in-arm with the stout blonde.

She smiled on perceiving Duroy, as though their eyes had already exchanged secrets, and, taking a chair, sat down quietly opposite him, and, making her friend sit down too, gave the order in a clear voice: " Waiter, two grenadines! "

Forestier, rather surprised, said: " You make yourself quite at home."

She replied: " It is your friend that captivates me. I believe that I could make a fool of myself for his sake."

Duroy, intimidated, could find nothing to say.

He twisted his curly mustache, smiling in a silly fashion. The waiter brought the drinks, which the women drank off at a draught, they then arose, and the brunette, with a friendly nod of the head and a tap on the arm with her fan, said to Duroy: "You are not very talkative."

And they went off, swinging their trains.

Forestier laughed. "I say, old fellow, you are very successful with the women. You must see to it. It may be a help to you." He was silent for a moment, and then continued in the dreamy tone of men who think aloud: "It is through them, too, that one gets on quickest."

And as Duroy still smiled without replying, he asked: "Are you going to stop any longer? I have had enough of it; I am going home."

The other murmured: "Yes, I shall stay a little longer. It is not too late."

Forestier rose. "Well, good night, then. Till to-morrow. Don't forget. Seventeen, Rue Fontaine, at half past seven."

"That is settled! Till to-morrow. Thanks."

They shook hands, and Forestier walked away.

As soon as he had disappeared Duroy felt himself free.

He soon caught sight of the two women, the blonde and the brunette, who were still making their way through the throng of men.

He went straight up to them, and when he was quite close his courage failed him.

The brunette said: "Have you found your tongue again?"

He stammered, "By Jove!" without being able to say anything else.

The three stood together, checking the stream of promenaders, the current of which swept around them.

She asked: "Will you walk with me?"

As they went out he thought that he could easily hire a suit of dress clothes for the next evening.

CHAPTER II

AN IMPORTANT DINNER-PARTY

ONSIEUR FORESTIER?"

"Third floor, the door on the left," the janitress had replied, in an amiable tone which betokened consideration for her tenant, and George Duroy ascended the stairs.

He felt somewhat abashed, awkward and ill at ease. He was wearing a dress suit for the first time in his life, and was uneasy about the general effect of his toilet. He felt it was altogether defective, from his boots, which were not of patent leather, though neat, for he was naturally smart about his footgear, to his shirt, which he had bought that very morning for four francs fifty centimes at the Magasin du Louvre, and the limp front of which was already rumpled.

His trousers, rather too loose, set off his legs badly, seeming to flap about the calf with that creased appearance which second-hand clothes present. The coat alone did not look bad, being, by chance, almost a perfect fit.

He was slowly ascending the stairs with beating heart and anxious mind, tortured above all by the fear of appearing ridiculous, when suddenly he saw in front of him a gentleman in full dress looking at him. They were so close to one another that Duroy took a step back and then remained standing in amazement; it was himself, reflected in a tall mirror on the first floor landing. A thrill of pleasure shot through him to find himself so much more presentable than he had imagined.

Only having a small shaving-glass in his room, he had not been able to see his whole figure at once, and as he only had imperfect glimpses of the various items of his improvised toilet, he had mentally exaggerated his imperfections, and harped to himself on the idea of appearing grotesque.

But on suddenly coming upon his reflection in the mirror, he had not even recognized himself; he had taken himself for some one else, for a gentleman whom at the first glance he had thought very well dressed and fashionable-looking. And now, looking at himself carefully, he recognized that really the general effect was satisfactory.

He studied himself as actors do when learning their parts. He smiled, held out his hand, made gestures, expressed sentiments of astonishment, pleasure, and approbation, and essayed smiles and glances, with a view to displaying his gallantry toward the ladies, to let them see that he admired them and desired their acquaintance.

On reaching the second story he noticed another mirror, and slackened his pace to view himself in it as he went by. His bearing seemed to him really graceful. He walked well. And now he was filled with unbounded confidence in himself. Certainly he must be successful with such an appearance, the wish to succeed, and his native resolution and independence of mind. He wanted to run, to jump, as he ascended the last flight of stairs. He stopped in front of the third mirror, twirled his mustache as he had a trick of doing, took off his hat to run his fingers through his hair, and muttered half aloud, as he often did: "What a capital notion!" Then raising his hand to the bell-handle, he rang.

The door opened almost at once, and he found himself face to face with a man-servant in plain clothes, serious, clean shaven, and so perfect in his get-up that Duroy became uneasy again without understanding the reason of his vague emotion, due, perhaps, to an unwitting comparison of the cut of their respective garments. The man-servant, who had patent leather shoes, asked, as he took the over coat which Duroy had carried on his arm, to avoid exposing the stains on it: "Whom shall I announce?"

And he announced the name through a draped back portière leading into a drawing-room.

But Duroy, suddenly losing his assurance, felt himself breathless and paralyzed by fear. He was

about to take his first step in the world he had looked forward to and longed for. He advanced nevertheless. A fair young woman, quite alone, was standing awaiting him in a large brilliantly lighted room full of plants, like a greenhouse.

He stopped short, quite disconcerted. Who was this lady who was smiling at him? Then he remembered that Forestier was married, and the thought that this pretty and elegent blonde must be his friend's wife put the finishing touch to his alarm.

He stammered: "Madame, I am——"

She held out her hand, saying: "I know, monsieur; Charles has told me of your meeting last

evening, and I am very pleased that he had the happy thought of asking you to dine with us today."

He blushed up to his ears, not knowing what to say, and felt himself being inspected from head to foot, weighed and criticised.

He longed to excuse himself, to invent some pretext for explaining the deficiencies of his toilet, but he could not think of one, and did not dare touch on this difficult subject.

He sat down on an armchair she pointed out to him, and as he felt the soft, springy, velvet-covered seat yield beneath his weight, as he felt himself, as it were, supported and clasped by the padded back and arms, it seemed to him that he was entering upon a new and enchanting life, that he was taking possession of something delightful, that he was becoming somebody, that he was saved, and he looked at Madame Forestier, who had not taken her eyes off him.

She was dressed in pale blue cashmere, which set off the outline of her slender waist and full bust. Her arms and neck issued from a cloud of white lace, with which the bodice and short sleeves were trimmed, and her fair hair, dressed high, left a little fair fluffy cloud above the nape of her neck.

Duroy recovered his assurance beneath her glance, which reminded him, without his knowing why, of that of the girl he met at the Folies Bergère. She had gray eyes, of a bluish tinge, which imparted to them a strange expression; a thin nose, full lips, a rather full chin, and irregular but attractive features, full of archness and charm. It was one of those faces every trait of which reveals a special grace and seems to have its meaning—every movement to say or to hide something.

After a brief silence she asked: "Have you been long in Paris?"

He replied slowly, recovering his self-possession: "A few months only, madame. I have a berth in one of the railway companies, but Forestier holds out the hope that I may, thanks to him, enter journalism."

She smiled more perceptibly and kindly, and murmured, lowering her voice: "Yes, I know."

The bell had rung again. The servant announced "Madame de Marelle."

This was a little brunette, who entered briskly, and seemed to be outlined—moulded, as it were—from head to foot in a dark dress made quite plainly. A red rose fastened in her black hair caught the eye at once, and seemed to stamp her physiognomy, accentuate her distinctive character, and give the marked tone required.

A little girl in short frocks followed her.

Madame Forestier darted forward, exclaiming: "Good evening, Clotilde."

They kissed one another, and then the child offered her forehead, with the assurance of a grown-up person, saying: "Good evening, cousin."

Madame Forestier kissed her, and then introduced them, saying: "Monsieur George Duroy, an old friend of Charles; Madame de Marelle, my friend, and a kind of relative." She added: "You know we do not put on any airs here. You quite understand, don't you?"

The young man bowed.

The door opened again, and a short, stout gentleman appeared, having on his arm a tall, handsome woman, much younger than himself, and of distinguished appearance and grave bearing. They were Monsieur Walter, a Jew from the South of France,

deputy, financier, capitalist, and manager of the *Vie Française,* and his wife, the daughter of Monsieur Basile Ravalau, the banker.

Then came, one following the other, Jacques Rival, very elegant, and Norbert de Varenne, whose coat-collar was rather shiny from the friction of the long locks that fell down on his shoulders, scattering over them a few specks of dandruff. His badly tied cravat looked as if it had already done duty. He advanced with the airs and graces of an old beau, and, taking Madame Forestier's hand, he imprinted a kiss on her wrist. As he bent forward, his long hair spread like water over her bare arm.

Forestier entered in his turn, offering excuses for being late. He had been detained at the office of the paper by the Morel affair. Monsieur Morel, a Radical deputy, had just addressed a question to the Ministry respecting a vote of credit for the colonization of Algeria.

The servant announced: "Dinner is served, Madame," and they passed into the dining room.

Duroy found himself seated between Madame de Marelle and her daughter. He again felt ill at ease, being afraid of making some mistake in the conventional handling of forks, spoons and glasses. There were four glasses, one of a pale bluish tint. What could one drink in that?

Nothing was said while the soup was being consumed, and then Norbert de Varenne asked: "Have you read the Gauthier case? What a funny business it is!"

And a discussion on this blackmailing case followed. They did not speak of it as the events recorded in newspapers are spoken of in private families, but as a disease is discussed among doctors, or

vegetables by market gardeners. They were neither shocked nor astonished at the facts, but sought out their hidden and secret motives with professional curiosity, and an utter indifference to the crime itself. The women, too, were interested in this investigation. And other recent events were discussed, commented upon, turned so as to show every side of them, and weighed correctly, with the practical glance and from the especial standpoint of dealers in news and vendors of the drama of life at so much a line, just as articles destined for sale are examined, turned over, and weighed by tradesmen. Then it was

a question of a duel, and Jacques Rival spoke. That was his business, no one else could handle it.

Duroy dared not put in a word. He glanced from time to time at his neighbor, who captivated him. A diamond, suspended by a thread of gold, dangled from her ear like a drop of water that had rolled down it. From time to time she made an observation which always brought a smile to her hearer's lips. She had a quaint, neat, unexpected wit, the wit of an experienced woman of the world who

views things with indifference, and judges them with a superficial and benevolent skepticism.

Duroy sought in vain for some compliment to pay her, and, not finding one, occupied himself with her daughter, filling her glass, holding the dishes for her as they were passed, and helping her. The child, more sedate than her mother, thanked him in a serious tone, with a little bow, saying: "You are very good, sir," and listened to her elders with a little thoughtful air.

The dinner was very good, and every one was enraptured. Monsieur Walter ate like an ogre, hardly spoke, and glanced sideways under his glasses at the dishes offered to him. Norbert de Varenne kept him company, and from time to time let drops of gravy fall on his shirt front. Forestier, silent and serious, watched everything, exchanging glances of intelligence with his wife, like confederates engaged together on a difficult task which is going on swimmingly.

Duroy had found the wine to his liking, and let his glass be filled every time. A delicious cheerfulness stole over him, a warm cheerfulness, that mounted from the stomach to the head, flowed through his limbs, and penetrated him throughout. He felt himself permeated by a sense of absolute well-being of life and thought, of body and soul.

He longed to speak to bring himself into notice, to be listened to, appreciated like those men whose slightest words are enjoyed.

But the conversation, which had been going on uninterruptedly, linking ideas one to another, jumping from one topic to another at a chance word, a mere trifle, and skimming over a thousand matters, turned again on the great question put by Monsieur

Morel in the Chamber representing the colonization of Algeria.

Monsieur Walter, between two courses, made a few jests, for his wit was skeptical and broad. Forestier told about his editorial for the following day. Jacques Rival demanded a military government with land grants to all officers after thirty years of colonial service.

"By this plan," he said, "you will create an energetic class of colonists, who will have already learned to love and understand the country, and will be acquainted with its language, and with all those grave local questions which are a stumbling block to all newcomers."

Norbert de Varenne interrupted him with "Yes, they will be acquainted with everything except agriculture. They will speak Arabic, but they will not know how to plant out beet-root and how to sow wheat. They will be even skillful at fencing, but very shaky as regards manures. On the contrary, this new land should be thrown absolutely open to every one. Intelligent men will achieve a position there, the others will go under. It is the social law."

A brief silence followed, and the listeners smiled.

George Duroy opened his mouth and said, feeling as much surprised at the sound of his own voice as if he had never heard himself speak: "What is chiefly lacking there is good land. The really fertile estates cost as much as they do in France, and are bought up as investments by rich Parisians. The real colonists, the poor fellows who leave home for lack of bread, are forced into the desert, where nothing will grow for want of water."

Every one looked at him, and he felt himself blushing.

Monsieur Walter asked: "Do you know Algeria, sir?"

George replied: "Yes, sir; I was there nearly two years and a half, and I was quartered in all three provinces."

Suddenly, unmindful of the Morel question, Norbert de Varenne interrogated him respecting a detail of manners and customs of which he had been informed by an officer. It was with respect to the Mzab, that strange little Arab republic sprung up in the midst of the Sahara, in the driest part of that burning region.

Duroy had twice visited the Mzab, and he narrated some of the customs of this singular country, where drops of water are valued as gold; where every inhabitant is bound to discharge all public duties; and where commercial honesty is carried further than among civilized nations.

He spoke with a certain raciness excited by the wine and by the wish to please, and told regimental anecdotes, incidents of Arab life and military adventure. He even hit on some telling phrases to depict these bare and yellow lands, eternally laid waste by the devouring fire of the sun.

All the women had their eyes turned upon him, and Madame Walter said, in her deliberate tones: "You could make a charming series of articles out of your recollections."

Walter looked at the young fellow over the top of his spectacles, as was his custom when he wanted to see any one's face distinctly. He looked at the dishes from beneath them.

Forestier seized the opportunity: "My dear sir, I had already spoken to you about Monsieur George Duroy, asking you to let me have him for my assistant in gleaning political tips. Since Marambot

left us, I have no one to send in quest of urgent and confidential information, and the paper suffers in consequence."

Daddy Walter became serious, and pushed his spectacles up on to his forehead, in order to look Duroy well in the face. Then he said: "It is true that Monsieur Duroy has evidently an original turn of thought. If he will come and have a chat with us to-morrow at three o'clock, we will settle the matter." Then, after a short silence, turning right round toward George, he added: "But write us a little series of entertaining articles on Algeria at once. Relate your experiences, and mix up the colonization question with them as you did just now. They are facts, genuine facts, and I am sure that they will greatly please our readers. But be quick. I must have the first article to-morrow or the day after, while the subject is being discussed in the Chamber, in order to catch the public."

Madame Walter added, with that serious grace which characterized everything she did, and which lent an air of kindness to her words: "And you have a charming title, 'Recollections of a Chasseur d'Afrique?' Is it not, Monsieur Norbert?"

The old poet, who had won renown late in life, feared and hated newcomers. He replied dryly: "Yes, excellent, provided that the keynote be followed, for that is the great difficulty; the exact key, what in music is called the pitch."

Madame Forestier cast on Duroy a smiling and protective glance, the glance of a connoisseur, which seemed to say: "Yes, you will get on." Madame de Marelle had turned toward him several times, and the diamond in her ear quivered incessantly as though the drop of water were about to fall.

The little girl remained quiet and serious, her head bent over her plate.

But the servant passed round the table, filling the blue glasses with Johannisberg, and Forestier proposed a toast, drinking with a bow to Monsieur Walter: "Prosperity to the *Vie Française.*"

Every one bowed toward the proprietor, who smiled, and Duroy, intoxicated with success, emptied his glass at a draught. He would have emptied a whole barrel after the same fashion; it seemed to him that he could have eaten a bullock or strangled a lion. He felt a superhuman strength in his limbs, unconquerable resolution and unbounded hope in his mind. He was now at home among these people. He had just taken his position, won his place. His glance rested on their faces with a new-born assurance, and he ventured for the first time to address his neighbor.

"You have the prettiest earrings I have ever seen, Madame."

She turned toward him with a smile. "It was an idea of my own to have the diamonds hung like that, just at the end of a thread. They really look like dewdrops, do they not?"

He murmured, ashamed of his own daring, and afraid of making a fool of himself:

"It is charming; but the ear, too, helps to set it off."

She thanked him with a look, one of those woman's looks that go straight to the heart. And as he turned his head he again met Madame Forestier's eye, always kindly, but now, as he thought, sparkling with a livelier mirth, an archness, an encouragement. All the men were now talking at once, with gesticulations and raised voices. They were discussing the great project of the metropolitan railway. The sub-

ject was not exhausted till dessert was finished, every one having a deal to say about the slowness of the methods of transit in Paris, the inconvenience of the tramway, the delays of omnibus traveling, and the rudeness of cabmen.

Then they left the dining-room to take coffee. Duroy, in jest, offered his arm to the little girl. She gravely thanked him, and raised herself on tiptoe in order to rest her hand on it.

On returning to the drawing-room he again experienced the sensation of entering a greenhouse. In each of the four corners of the room tall palms unfolded their shapely leaves, rising to the ceiling and there spreading downward.

On each side of the fireplace were india rubber plants like round columns, with the dark-green leaves spreading out one above the other; and on the piano two unknown shrubs, one covered with crimson flowers, the other all white, had the appearance of artificial plants, appearing too perfect to be real.

The air was cool, and laden with a soft, vague perfume that could scarcely be defined. The young fellow, now more himself, considered the room attentively. It was not large; nothing attracted the eye except the shrubs, no striking bright color, but one felt at ease in it; one felt soothed and refreshed, and, as it were, caressed by one's surroundings.

"Do you take coffee, Monsieur Duroy?" And Madame Forestier held out a cup toward him with that smile which never left her lips.

"Thank you, Madame."

He took the cup, and as he bent forward to take a lump of sugar from the sugar basin carried by the little girl, Madame Forestier said to him in a low voice: "Be attentive to Madame Walter."

Then she drew back before he could answer.

He first drank his coffee, which he was afraid of spilling on the carpet; then, his mind more at ease, he sought for some excuse to approach the wife of his new chief and begin a conversation. All at once he noticed that she was holding an empty cup in her hand, and as she was at some distance from a table, did not know where to put it. He darted forward with "Allow me, Madame?"

"Thank you, sir."

He took away the cup, and then returned.

"If you knew, Madame," he began, "the happy hours the *Vie Française* helped me to pass when I was away in the desert. It is really the only paper that is readable out of France, for it is more literary, wittier, and less monotonous than the others. There is something of everything in it."

She smiled with amiable indifference, and answered, seriously:

"Monsieur Walter took a great deal of trouble to create this type of newspaper which supplies a need of the day."

And they began to chat. He had an easy flow of small talk, a charm in his voice and look, and an irresistible seductiveness about his mustache. It curled coquettishly about his lips, reddish brown, with a paler tint at its curled tips.

They chatted about Paris, its suburbs, the banks of the Seine, watering places, summer amusements, all the current topics on which one can talk for ever without wearying one's self.

Then as Monsieur Norbert de Varenne approached with a liqueur glass in his hand, Duroy discreetly withdrew.

Madame de Marelle, who had been speaking with Madame Forestier, summoned him.

" Well, Monsieur," she said abruptly, " so you want to try your hand at journalism? "

He spoke vaguely of his projects, and then recommenced with her the conversation he had just had with Madame Walter; but as he understood his subject better he did it more justice, repeating as his own the things he had just heard. And he continually looked his companion in the eyes, as though to give a deep meaning to what he was saying.

She, in her turn, related anecdotes with the easy flow of spirits of a woman who knows she is witty and is always seeking to appear so, and becoming familiar she laid her hand from time to time on his arm, and lowered her voice to make trifling remarks which thus assumed a character of intimacy. He would have liked to have shown his devotion for her on the spot, to have defended her, shown her what he was worth, and his delay in his replies to her showed the preoccupation of his mind.

But suddenly, without any reason, Madame de Marelle called " Laurine! " and the little girl came.

" Sit down here, child; you will catch cold near the window."

Duroy was seized with a wild longing to kiss the child. It was as though some part of the kiss would reach the mother.

He asked in a gallant and at the same time fatherly tone: " Will you allow me to kiss you, Mademoiselle? "

The child looked up at him in surprise.

" Answer, my dear," said Madame de Marelle, laughingly.

" Yes, sir, this time; but it will not do always."

Duroy, sitting down, lifted Laurine on to his knees and brushed the fine curly hair above her forehead with his lips.

Her mother was surprised. "What! she has not run away; it is astounding. Usually she will only let ladies kiss her. You are irresistible, Monsieur Duroy."

He blushed without answering, and gently jogged the little girl on his knee.

Madame Forestier drew near, and exclaimed with astonishment: "What! Laurine tamed! what a miracle!"

Jacques Rival also came up, cigar in mouth, and Duroy rose to take leave, afraid of spoiling, by some unlucky remark, the work done, his task of conquest begun.

He bowed, softly pressed the little outstretched hands of the women, and then heartily shook those of the men. He noted that the hand of Jacques Rival, warm and dry, answered cordially to his grip; that of Norbert de Varenne, damp and cold, slipped through his fingers; that of Daddy Walter, cold and flabby, was without expression or energy; and that of Forestier was plump and moist. His friend said to him in a low tone: "To-morrow at three o'clock; do not forget."

"Oh! no, do not fear."

When he found himself once more on the stairs, he felt a great longing to run down them, so great was his joy, and he darted forward, going down two steps at a time, but suddenly he caught sight of a large mirror on the second floor landing of a gentleman in a hurry, and he stopped short, ashamed, as if he had been caught tripping.

Then he looked at himself in the glass for some time, astonished at being really such a handsome fellow, smiled complacently, and, taking leave of his reflection, bowed low to it as one bows to a personage of importance.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST STEP

WHEN George Duroy found himself in the street, he hesitated as to what he should do. He wanted to run, to dream, to walk about thinking of the future as he breathed the soft night air, but the thought of the series of articles asked for by Mr. Walter haunted him, and he decided to go home at once and set to work.

He walked along quickly, reached the outer boulevard, and followed it as far as the Rue Boursault, where he dwelt. The house, six stories high, was inhabited by a score of small households of tradespeople and workmen, and he experienced a sickening sensation of disgust, longing to leave the place and live like well-to-do people in a clean dwelling, as he ascended the stairs, lighting his way with wax matches up the dirty steps, littered

with bits of paper, cigarette ends, and scraps of kitchen refuse.

The young fellow's room on the fifth floor looked into a kind of abyss, the huge cut of the Western Railway just above the exit of the tunnel by the Batignolles Station. Duroy opened his window and leaned against the rusty iron cross bar.

Beneath him, at the bottom of the dark hole, three motionless red lights resembled the eyes of hugh wild animals, and further on a glimpse could be caught of others and of others again still further. Every moment whistles, prolonged or brief, pierced the silence of the night, some close at hand, others scarcely audible, coming from the direction of Asnières. Their modulations were akin to those of the human voice; one of them was approaching, with its plaintive appeal growing louder and louder every moment, and soon a big yellow light appeared, advancing with a loud noise, and Duroy watched the string of railway carriages swallowed up in the tunnel.

Then he said to himself: "Come, let's get to work."

He placed his light upon the table, but at the moment of commencing he found that he had only a quire of letter paper in the place. More's the pity, but he would make use of it by opening out each sheet to its full extent. He dipped his pen in ink, and wrote at the head of the page, in his best hand, "Souvenirs d'un Chasseur d'Afrique."

Then he tried to frame the opening sentence. He remained with his head on his hands and his eyes fixed on the white sheet spread out before him. What should he say? He could no longer recall anything of what he had been relating a little while back; not an anecdote, not a fact, nothing.

All at once the thought struck him: "I must begin with my departure."

And he wrote: "It was in 1874, about the middle of May, when France, exhausted, was resting after the catastrophes of the terrible year."

He stopped short, not knowing how to lead up to what should follow—his embarkation, his voyage, his first impressions.

After ten minutes' reflection, he resolved to put off the introduction till the morrow, and set to work at once to describe Algiers.

And he traced on his paper the words: "Algiers is a white city," without being able to state anything further. He recalled in his mind the pretty white city, tumbling as it were like a cascade of flat-roofed dwellings from the summit of its hills to the sea, but he could no longer find a word to express what he had seen or what he had felt.

After a violent effort, he added: "It is partly inhabited by Arabs."

Then he threw down his pen and rose from his chair.

On his little iron bedstead, hollowed in the center by the weight of his body, he saw his everyday garments lying, worn and limp, and ugly as the clothing at the Morgue. On a straw-bottomed chair his tall hat, his only one, brim uppermost, seemed to be awaiting an alms.

The wall paper, gray with blue bouquets, showed as many stains as flowers, old, suspicious-looking stains, the origin of which could not be defined; crushed insects or drops of oil, finger tips smeared with pomatum, or soapy water scattered while washing. It smacked of shabby genteel poverty, the poverty of a Paris lodging house. Anger rose within him at the wretchedness of his mode of living. He

said to himself that he must get out of it at once; that he must finish with this irksome existence the very next day.

A frantic desire to work suddenly taking possession of him again, he sat down once more at the table, and began anew to seek for phrases to describe the strange and charming physiognomy of Algiers, that anteroom of vast and mysterious Africa; the Africa of wandering Arabs and unknown tribes of negroes; that unexplored Africa whose improbable-looking animals, seemingly made to figure in fairy tales, are sometimes shown us in zoölogical gardens; ostriches, those exaggerated fowls; gazelles, those sacred goats; surprising and grotesque giraffes, grave-looking camels, monstrous hippopotami, shapeless rhinoceroses, and gorillas, those frightful-looking brothers of mankind.

He vaguely felt ideas occurring to him; he might perhaps have uttered them, but he could not put them into writing. And his impotence exasperating him, he got up again, his hands damp with perspiration and his temples throbbing.

His eyes falling on his washing bill, brought up that evening by the concierge, he was suddenly seized with wild despair. All his joy vanished in a twinkling, with his confidence in himself and his faith in the future. It was all up; he could not do anything, he would never be anybody; he felt played out, incapable, good for nothing, damned.

And he went and leaned out of the window again, just as a train issued from the tunnel with a loud and violent noise. It was going away far off, across the fields and plains toward the sea. And the recollection of his parents stirred in Duroy's breast. It would pass near them, that train, within a few leagues of their house. He saw it again, the

little house at the entrance to the village of Canteleu, on the summit of the slope overlooking Rouen and the immense valley of the Seine.

His father and mother kept a little inn, a place where the tradesfolk of the suburbs of Rouen came out to lunch on Sunday and called "A la Belle Vue." They had wanted to make a gentleman of their son, and had sent him to college. Having finished his studies, and failing in his examination for the degree of B. A., he had entered the army with the intention of becoming an officer, a colonel, a general. But, disgusted with military life long before the completion of his five years' term of service, he had dreamed of making a fortune in Paris.

He came there at the expiration of his term of service, despite the entreaties of his father and mother, who, their visions having fled, wanted now to have him at home with them. In his turn, he hoped to achieve a future; he foresaw a triumph by means as yet vaguely defined in his mind, but which he felt sure he could scheme out and further.

His comrades used to say of him: "He is a sharp fellow, a schemer, he will look out for himself," and he had promised himself to act up to his character.

His inborn conscience of a Norman, blunted by the daily dealings of garrison life, rendered elastic by pillaging exploits in Africa, illicit commissions, shady tricks in business; spurred on, too, by the notions of honor current in the army, military bravado, patriotic sentiments, the fine-sounding tales current among non-commissioned officers, and the vain glory of the profession of arms, had become a kind of trick box in which something of everything was to be found.

But the wish to succeed reigned sovereign in it.

He had, without noticing it, begun to dream again, as he did every evening. He pictured to himself some splendid love adventure which should bring about all at once the realization of his hopes. He married the daughter of some banker or nobleman whom he met in the street and captivated at the first glance.

The shrill whistle of a locomotive, issuing from the tunnel like a big rabbit bolting out of its hole and tearing at full speed along the rails toward the round house, where it was to rest, awoke him from his dream.

Then, repossessed by the vague and joyful hope which ever haunted his mind, he wafted a kiss into the night, a kiss of love addressed to the vision of the woman he was awaiting, a kiss of desire addressed to the fortune he coveted. Then he closed his window, and began to undress, murmuring:

"I shall feel in a better mood for it to-morrow. My thoughts are not clear to-night. Perhaps, too, I have had just a little too much to drink. One can't work well under those circumstances."

He got into bed, blew out his light, and went off to sleep almost immediately.

He awoke early, as one wakes on mornings of hope or of anxiety, and, jumping out of bed, opened his window to drink a cup of fresh air, as he phrased it.

The houses of the Rue de Rome opposite, on the other side of the broad railway cut, glittering in the rays of the rising sun, seemed to be painted with white light. Afar off on the right a glimpse was caught of the slopes of Argenteuil, the hills of Sannois, and the windmills of Orgemont, through a light bluish mist, like a floating and transparent veil cast across the horizon.

Duroy remained for some minutes gazing at the distant landscape, and he murmured: "It would be devilish nice out there a day like this." Then he bethought himself that he must set to work, and that at once, and also send his janitor's lad, at a cost of ten sous, to the office to say that he was ill.

He sat down at his table, dipped his pen in the ink, leaned his forehead on his hand, and sought for ideas. All in vain—nothing came.

He was not discouraged, however. He thought: "Bah, I am not accustomed to it. It is a trade to be learned like all other trades. I must have some help the first time. I will go and find Forestier, who will start my article going in ten minutes."

And he dressed himself.

When he got into the street he came to the conclusion that it was still too early to present himself at the residence of his friend, who must be a late sleeper. He therefore walked slowly along beneath the trees of the outer boulevard. It was not yet nine o'clock when he reached the Parc Monceau, fresh from its morning watering. Sitting down on a bench, he began to dream again. A well-dressed young man was walking up and down at a short distance, awaiting a woman, no doubt. Yes; she appeared, closely veiled and walking rapidly, and taking his arm, after a brief clasp of the hand, they walked off together. A riotous need of love broke out in Duroy's heart, a need of amours at once distinguished and delicate. He rose and resumed his journey, thinking of Forestier. What luck the fellow had! He reached the door at the moment his friend was coming out of it.

"You here at this time of day! What do you want of me?"

Duroy, taken aback at meeting him thus, just as he was starting out, stammered: "You see, you see, I can't manage to write my articles; you know the article Monsieur Walter asked me to write on Algeria. It is not very surprising, considering that I have never written anything. Practice is needed for that as for everything else. I shall get used to it very quickly, I am sure, but I do not know how to set about beginning. I have plenty of ideas, but I cannot manage to express them."

He stopped, hesitatingly, and Forestier smiled somewhat slyly, saying: "I know how it is."

Duroy went on: "Yes, it must happen to every one when they first begin. Well, I came, I came to ask you for some help. In ten minutes you can give me a start, you can show me how to shape it. It will be giving me a good lesson in style, and really without you I do not see how I can manage it."

Forestier still smiled, and, tapping his old comrade on the arm, said: "Go in and see my wife; she will settle your business quite as well as I could. I have trained her to that kind of work. I myself have not time this morning, or I would willingly have done it for you."

Duroy, suddenly abashed, hesitated, feeling afraid.

"But I cannot call on her at this time of the day."

"Oh! yes, she is up. You will find her in my study arranging some notes for me."

Duroy refused to go upstairs, saying: "No. I can't think of such a thing."

Forestier took him by the shoulders, twisted him round on his heels, and, pushing him toward the staircase, said: "Go along, you great donkey, when I tell you to. You are not going to oblige me

to go up these flights of stairs again to introduce you and explain the fix you are in.''

Then Duroy made up his mind. '' Thanks, then, I will go up,'' he said. ''I shall tell her that you forced me, positively forced me to come and see her.''

'' All right. She won't scratch your eyes out. Above all, don't forget our appointment for three o'clock.''

'' Oh, never fear! ''

Forestier hastened off, and Duroy began to ascend the stairs slowly, step by step, thinking over what he should say, and feeling uneasy as to his probable reception.

The manservant, wearing a blue apron and holding a broom in his hand, opened the door to him.

'' Master is not at home,'' he said, without waiting to be spoken to.

Duroy persisted.

'' Ask Madame Forestier,'' said he, '' whether she will receive me, and tell her that I have come from her husband, whom I met in the street.''

Then he waited while the man went away, returned and, opening a door on the right, said: '' Madame will see you, sir.''

She was seated in an office armchair in a small room, the walls of which were wholly hidden by books carefully ranged on shelves of black wood. The bindings, of various tints, red, yellow, green, violet, and blue, gave some color and liveliness to these monotonous lines of volumes.

She turned round, still smiling. She was wrapped in a white dressing-gown, trimmed with lace, and as she held out her hand, displayed her bare arm in its wide sleeve.

'' So soon? '' she said, and then added: '' That

is not meant for a reproach, but a simple question."

"Oh, Madame, I did not wish to come up, but your husband, whom I met downstairs, obliged me to do so. I am so confused that I dare not tell you what brings me."

She pointed to a chair, saying: "Sit down and tell me about it."

She was twirling a pen quill between her fingers, and in front of her was a half-written page, interrupted by the young fellow's arrival. She seemed quite at home at this work table, as much at her ease as if in her drawing-room engaged in everyday duties. A faint perfume emanated from her dressing gown, the fresh perfume of a recent toilet. Duroy sought to divine, fancied he could trace, the outline of her plump, youthful figure through the soft material enveloping it.

She went on, as he did not reply: "Well, come, tell me what it is?"

He murmured, hesitatingly: "Well, you see—but I really dare not—I was working last night very late and quite early this morning on the article upon Algeria, upon which Monsieur Walter asked me to write, and I could not get on with it—I tore up all my attempts. I am not accustomed to this kind of work, and I came to ask Forestier to help me this once——"

She interrupted him, laughing heartily. "And he told you to come and see me? That is a nice thing."

"Yes, Madame. He said that you will get me out of my difficulty better than himself, but I did not dare, I did not wish to—you understand."

She rose, saying: "It will be delightful to work in collaboration with you like that. I am charmed

at the notion. Come, sit down in my place, for they know my handwriting at the office. And we will soon turn out a good article."

He sat down, took a pen, spread a sheet of paper before him, and waited.

Madame Forestier, standing by, watched him make these preparations, then took a cigarette from the mantelshelf and lit it.

"I cannot work without smoking," said she. "Come, what are you going to say?"

He lifted his head toward her with astonishment.

"But that is just what I don't know, since that is what I came to see you about."

She replied: "Oh! I will put it in order for you. I will make the sauce, but then I want the joint."

He remained embarrassed before her. At length he said hesitatingly: "I should like to relate my journey there from the beginning."

Then she sat down before him on the other side of the table, and looking him in the eyes:

"Well, tell it me first; for myself alone, you understand, slowly and without forgetting anything, and I will select what is to be used of it."

But as he did not know where to commence, she began to question him as a priest would have done in the confessional, putting precise questions which recalled to him forgotten details, people encountered and faces merely caught sight of.

When she had made him speak thus for about a quarter of an hour, she suddenly interrupted him with:

"Now we will begin. In the first place, we will imagine that you are narrating your impressions to a friend, which will allow you to write a lot of

tomfoolery, to make remarks of all kinds, to be natural and funny if we can. Begin:

"My Dear Henry: You wish to know what Algeria is like, and you shall. I will send you, having nothing else to do in the little cabin of dried mud which serves me as a habitation, a kind of journal of my life, day by day, and hour by hour. It will be a little spicy at times unfortunately, but you are not obliged to show it to your lady friends."

She paused to relight her cigarette, which had gone out, and the faint creaking of the quill on the paper stopped, too.

"Let us continue," said she.

"Algeria is a great French possession on the frontiers of the great unknown countries called the Desert, the Sahara, Central Africa, etc., etc.

"Algiers is the door, the pretty white door of this strange continent.

"But it is first necessary to get to it, which is not a rosy task for every one. I am, you know, an excellent horseman, for I break in the colonel's horses; but a man may be a very good rider and a very bad sailor. That is my case.

"You remember Surgeon-Major Simbretas, whom we used to call Old Ipecacuanha, and how when we thought ourselves ripe for a twenty-four hours' stay in the infirmary, that blessed sojourning place, we would go to see him.

"How he used to sit on his chair, with his fat legs in his red trousers wide apart, his hands on his knees, and his elbows stuck out, rolling his great eyes, and gnawing his white mustache.

"You remember his favorite prescription:

"This man's stomach is out of order. Give him a dose of emetic number three, according to my

formula, and then twelve hours off duty, and he will be all right.'

"It was a sovereign remedy, that emetic—sovereign and irresistible. One swallowed it because one had to. Then when one had undergone the effects of Old Ipecacuanha's prescription, one enjoyed twelve well-earned hours' rest.

"Well, my dear fellow, to reach Africa it is necessary to undergo for forty hours the effects of another kind of irresistible emetic, according to the prescription of the Compagnie Transatlantique."

She rubbed her hands, delighted with the idea.

She got up and walked about, after lighting another cigarette, and dictated as she puffed out little whiffs of smoke, which, issuing at first through a little orifice in the midst of her compressed lips, slowly spread and gradually disappeared, leaving in the air faint gray lines, a kind of transparent mist, like a spider's web. Sometimes with her open hand she would brush aside these light traces; at others she would cut them asunder with her forefinger, and then watch with serious attention the two halves of the almost impenetrable vapor slowly disappear.

Duroy, with his eyes, followed all her gestures, her attitudes, the movements of her form and features, busied with this vague pastime which did not preoccupy her thoughts.

She now imagined the incidents of the journey, sketched traveling companions invented by herself, and a love affair.

Then, sitting down again, she questioned Duroy on the topography of Algeria, of which she was absolutely ignorant. In ten minutes, she knew as much about it as he did, and she dictated a little chapter of political and colonial geography to coach

the reader in such matters and prepare him to understand the serious questions which were to be brought forward in the following articles. She continued by a trip into the provinces of Orana, a fantastic trip, in which it was, above all, a question of women, Moorish, Jewish, and Spanish.

"That is what interests most," she said.

She wound up by a sojourn at Saïda, at the foot of the great tablelands; and by a pretty little intrigue between the non-commissioned George Duroy and a Spanish work-girl employed at the *alfa* factory at Aïn el Hadjar. She described their rendezvous at night amidst the bare, stony hills, with jackals, hyenas, and Arab dogs, yelling, barking, and howling among the rocks.

And she gleefully uttered the words, "To be continued." Then, rising, she added: "That is how one writes an article, my dear sir. Sign it, if you please."

He hesitated.

"But sign it, I tell you."

Then he began to laugh, and wrote at the bottom of the page, "George Duroy."

She went on smoking as she walked up and down; and he still kept looking at her, unable to find anything to say to thank her, happy to be with her, filled with gratitude, and with the pleasure of this new-born intimacy. It seemed to him that everything around him was part of her, everything, down to the walls covered with books. The chairs, the furniture, the air in which the perfume of tobacco was floating, had about them something good, sweet, and charming, which emanated from her.

Suddenly she asked: "What do you think of my friend, Madame de Marelle?"

He was surprised, and answered: "I think—I think—her very charming."

"Is she not?"

"Yes, indeed."

He longed to add: "But not as charming as yourself," but dared not.

She resumed: "And if you only knew how funny, original, and intelligent she is. She is a Bohemian—a true Bohemian. That is why her husband scarcely cares for her. He only sees her defects, and does not appreciate her good qualities."

Duroy felt stupefied at learning that Madame de Marelle was married, and yet it was only natural she should be.

He said: "Oh! she is married, then. And what is her husband?"

Madame Forestier gently shrugged her shoulders, and raised her eyebrows, with a gesture of incomprehensible meaning.

"Oh! he is an inspector on the Northern Railway. He spends eight days out of the month in Paris. What his wife calls 'obligatory duty,' or 'week of drudgery,' or 'holy week.' When you know her better, you will see how bright and charming she is. Go and call on her one of these days."

Duroy no longer thought of leaving. It seemed to him that he was going to remain here forever; that he was at home.

But the door opened noiselessly, and a tall gentleman entered without being announced. He stopped short on seeing a stranger. Madame Forestier seemed troubled for a moment; then she said in natural tones, though a slight rosy flush had risen to her cheeks:

"Come in, my dear sir. I must introduce one of Charles's old friends, Monsieur George Duroy, a fu-

ture journalist." Then, in another tone, she added: "Our best and most intimate friend, the Comte de Vaudrec."

The two men bowed, looking each other in the eyes, and Duroy at once took his leave.

There was no attempt to detain him. He stammered a few thanks, grasped the outstretched hand of Madame Forestier, bowed again to the newcomer, who preserved the cold, grave air of a man of position, and went out quite disturbed, as if he had made a fool of himself.

On finding himself once more in the street, he felt sad and uneasy, haunted by the vague idea of some hidden annoyance. He walked on, asking himself whence came this sudden melancholy. He could not tell, but the stern face of the Comte de Vaudrec, already somewhat aged, with gray hair, and the calmly insolent look of a very wealthy man, constantly recurred to his recollection. He noted that the arrival of this unknown, breaking off a charming *tête-à-tête,* had produced in him that chilly, despairing sensation that a word overheard,a trifle noticed, the least thing, suffices sometimes to bring about. It seemed to him, too, that this man, without his being able to guess why, was displeased at finding him there.

He had nothing more to do till three o'clock, and it was not yet noon. He had still six francs fifty centimes in his pocket, and he went and lunched at the Bouillon Duval. Then he prowled about the boulevard, and as three o'clock struck, ascended the advertisement stairway of the *Vie Française.*

The office boys were seated with folded arms on a bench, while, at an enclosed desk, an employé was sorting the mail that had just arrived. The entire get-up of the place, intended to impress visitors,

was perfect. Every one had the appearance, bearing, dignity, and smartness suitable to the anteroom of a large daily newspaper.

"Monsieur Walter, if you please?" inquired Duroy.

"The manager is engaged, sir," replied the doorkeeper. "Will you take a seat, sir?" and he indicated the waiting room, already full of people.

There were men grave, important-looking, and wearing the ribbon of an order; and men with no linen apparent, whose frock coats, buttoned up to the chin, bore upon the breast stains recalling the outlines of continents and seas on geographical maps. There were three women among them. One of them was pretty, smiling, and overdressed, and had the air of a gay woman; her neighbor, with a wrinkled, tragic countenance, also stylishly dressed, but in a more severe fashion, had about her that something worn and artificial that old actresses generally have; a kind of false youth.

The third woman, in mourning, sat in a corner with the air of a grieving widow. Duroy thought that she had come to ask for charity.

However, no one was ushered into the room beyond, and more than twenty minutes had elapsed.

Duroy was seized with an idea, and, going back to the doorkeeper, said: "Monsieur Walter made an appointment for me to call on him here at three o'clock. At all events, see whether my friend Monsieur Forestier is here."

He was at once ushered along a lengthy passage which brought him to a large room, where four gentlemen were writing at a large table covered with green leather.

Forestier, standing before the fireplace, was

smoking a cigarette. He turned his head as Duroy entered, saying: "Oh! here you are! Have you seen the governor?"

"Come with me, I will take you in to see the governor; otherwise, you might be getting moldy here till seven in the evening."

They recrossed the waiting room, in which the same people were waiting in the same order. As soon as Forestier appeared, the young woman and the old actress, rising quickly, came up to him. He took them aside, one after the other, into the bay window, and, although they took care to talk in low tones, Duroy noticed that they were on familiar terms.

Then, having passed through two padded doors, they entered the manager's room. The business which had detained him for an hour or so was nothing more than a game of écarté with some of the gentlemen with flat-brimmed hats whom Duroy had noticed the night before.

Monsieur Walter dealt and played with concentrated attention and cautiously, while his adversary threw down, picked up, and handled the light bits of colored pasteboard with the swiftness, skill, and grace of a practiced player. Norbert de Varenne, seated in the managerial armchair, was writing an article; Jacques Rival, stretched at full length on a couch, was smoking a cigar with his eyes closed.

The room smelt close with that blended odor of leather-covered furniture, stale tobacco, and printing ink peculiar to editors' rooms and familiar to all journalists. Upon the black wood table, inlaid with brass, lay an incredible pile of papers, letters, cards, newspapers, magazines, bills, and printed matter of every description.

Forestier shook hands with the watchers standing behind the card players, and without a word watched the progress of the game, then as soon as Daddy Walter had won he said: "Here is my friend Duroy."

The manager glanced sharply at the young fellow over the glasses of his spectacles, and said:

"Have you brought my article? It would fit in very well to-day with the Morel debate."

Duroy took the sheets of paper folded in four from his pocket, saying: "Here it is, sir."

The manager seemed pleased, and remarked with a smile: "Very good, very good. You are a man of your word. You must look through this for me, Forestier."

But Forestier hastened to reply: "It is not worth while, Monsieur Walter. I went over it with him to give him a lesson in the tricks of the trade. It is very well done."

And the manager, who was gathering up the cards dealt by a tall, thin gentleman, a deputy belonging to the Left Centre, remarked with indifference. "All right, then."

Forestier, however, did not let him begin the new game, but, stooping, murmured in his ear: "You know you promised me to take on Duroy to replace Marambot. Shall I engage him on the same terms?"

"Yes, certainly."

Taking his friend's arm, the journalist led him away from the table, while Monsieur Walter resumed the game.

Norbert de Varenne had not lifted his head; he did not appear to have seen or recognized Duroy. Jacques Rival, on the contrary, had shaken his hand with the marked and demonstrative energy of a

good fellow who may be reckoned upon in case of any little difficulty.

They passed through the waiting room again, and as every one looked at them, Forestier said to the youngest of the women, in a tone loud enough to be heard by the rest: "The manager will see you directly. He is just now engaged with two members of the Budget Committee."

Then he passed swiftly on, with a hurried, business-like air, as though about to draft at once an article of the utmost importance.

As soon as they were back in the editor's room, Forestier said to Duroy: "Report here every day at three o'clock, and I will tell you the places you are to go to during the day, or evening, or the next morning. One—I will give you, first of all, a letter of introduction to the chief of police, who will put you in touch with one of his subordinates. You will arrange with him to obtain all the important news, official and quasi-official information, you know. In all matters of detail you will apply to Saint-Potin, who is up in the work. You can see him by-and-by, or to-morrow. Above all, cultivate the knack of dragging information out of the men I send you to see and of obtaining an entrance everywhere, in spite of closed doors. You will receive for this a salary of two hundred francs a month, with two sous a line for the paragraphs you glean and two sous a line for all articles written by you, to order, on different subjects."

Duroy drank a glass of beer with his new comrades, and then said to his friend: "What am I to do now?"

"I have nothing for you to-day. You can go if you want to."

"And our—our—article, will it go in to-night?"

"Yes, but do not bother yourself about it; I will correct the proofs. Write the continuation for to-morrow, and come here at three o'clock, the same as to-day."

After shaking hands with every one, Duroy went down the gorgeous staircase with a light heart.

CHAPTER IV

LESSONS IN JOURNALISM

DUROY slept badly, so excited was he by the wish to see his article in print. He was up as soon as it was daylight, and was prowling about the streets long before the hour at which the porters from the newspaper offices run with their papers from kiosk to kiosk.

He went on to the Saint Lazare terminus, knowing that the *Vie Française* would be delivered there before it reached his own district. As he was still too early, he wandered up and down on the footpath.

He saw the newspaper vendor arrive, open her newsstand, and then saw a man bearing on his head a pile of papers. He rushed forward. There were the *Figaro,* the *Gil Blas,* the *Gaulois,* the *Événement,* and two or three morning journals, but the *Vie Française* was not among them. Fear seized him. Suppose the " Souvenirs d'un Chas-

seur d'Afrique" had been kept over for the next day, or that by chance, they had not at the last moment seemed suitable to Daddy Walter!

Turning back to the kiosque, he saw that the paper was on sale without his having seen it.

He darted forward, unfolded it after having thrown down three sous, and ran through the headings of the articles on the first page. Nothing. His heart began to beat, and he experienced strong emotion on reading at the foot of a column in large letters, " George Duroy." It was in; what happiness!

He began to walk along unconsciously, the paper in his hand and his hat on one side of his head, with a longing to stop the passers-by in order to say to them: " Buy this, buy this, there is an article by me in it." He would have liked to have bellowed with all the power of his lungs, like some vendor of papers at night on the boulevards, " Read the *Vie Française;* read George Duroy's article, ' Souvenirs d'un Chasseur d'Afrique.' "

And suddenly he felt a wish to read this article himself, to read it in a public place, a café, in sight of all. He looked about for some establishment already filled with customers. He had to walk in search of one for some time. He sat down at last outside a kind of wine shop, where several customers were already installed, and began to read his article, and several times said aloud: " Very good, very well put," to attract the attention of his neighbors, and inspire them with the wish to know what there was in this sheet. Then, on going away, he left it on the table.

He thought: " What shall I do now? " And he decided to go to his office, take his month's salary, and tender his resignation. He felt a thrill of an-

ticipatory pleasure at the thought of the faces that would be pulled by the chief of his room and by his colleagues. The notion of the bewilderment of the chief above all charmed him.

He walked slowly, so as not to get there too early, the cashier's office not opening before ten o'clock.

His office was a large gloomy room in which gas had to be kept burning almost all day long in winter. It looked into a narrow courtyard, with other offices on the farther side of it. There were eight clerks there, besides a sub-chief hidden behind a screen in one corner.

Duroy first went to get the hundred and eighteen francs twenty-five centimes inclosed in a yellow envelope, and placed in the drawer of the pay clerk, and then, with a conquering air, entered the large room in which he had already spent so many days.

As soon as he came in the sub-chief, Monsieur Potel, called out to him: "Ah! it is you, Monsieur Duroy? The chief has already asked for you several times. You know that he will not allow any one to plead illness two days running without a doctor's certificate."

Duroy, who was standing in the middle of the room preparing his sensational effect, replied in a loud voice:

"As if I cared whether he does or not!"

There was a movement of amazement among the clerks, and Monsieur Potel's face appeared, filled with astonishment, above the screen which shut him up as in a box. At length the sub-chief said hesitatingly: "What did you say?"

"I said that it makes no difference to me. I have only called to-day to tender my resignation.

I am engaged on the staff of the *Vie Française* at five hundred francs a month, and extra pay for all I write. Indeed, I made my *début* this morning."

The effect was overwhelming. No one stirred.

Duroy went on: "I will go and inform Monsieur Perthuis, and then come and wish you good-by."

And he went in search of the chief, who exclaimed on seeing him: "Ah! here you are. You know that I won't have——"

His late employé cut him short: "It's not worth while roaring like that."

Monsieur Perthuis, a stout man, as red as a turkeycock, was choked with astonishment.

Duroy continued: "I have had enough of this crib. I made my *début* this morning in journalism, where I am assured of a very good position. I have the honor to bid you good-day."

And he went out. He was avenged.

As he promised, he went and shook hands with his old colleagues, who scarcely dared speak to him, for they had overheard his conversation with the chief, the door having remained open.

He found himself in the street again, with his salary in his pocket. He had a substantial breakfast at a good but cheap restaurant he was acquainted with, and having again purchased the *Vie Française,* and left it on the table, went into several shops, where he bought some trifles, solely for the sake of ordering them to be sent home, and giving his name—"George Duroy," with the addition, "I am the editor of the *Vie Française.*"

Then he gave the name of the street and the number, taking care to add: "Leave it with the janitor."

As he had still some time to spare, he went into

the shop of a lithographer, who wrote visiting cards at a moment's notice, before the eyes of passers-by, and had a hundred, bearing his new occupation under his name, printed off while he waited.

Then he went to the office of the paper.

Forestier received him loftily, as one receives a subordinate. "Ah! here you are. Good. I have several things for you to attend to. Just wait ten minutes. I will finish what I am about."

And he went on with a letter he was writing.

At the other end of the large table a fat, bald, little man, with a very pale puffy face, and a white and shining head, was writing with his nose on the paper owing to extreme short-sightedness. Forestier said to him: "I say, Saint-Potin, when are you going to interview those people?"

"At four o'clock."

"Take young Duroy with you, and show him the tricks of the trade."

Then, turning to his friend, Forestier added: "Have you brought the continuation of the Algerian article? The opening this morning was very successful."

Duroy, taken aback, stammered: "No. I thought I should have time this afternoon. I had heaps of things to do. I was not able."

The other shrugged his shoulder with a dissatisfied air. "If you are not more exact than that you will spoil your future. Daddy Walter was reckoning on your copy. I will tell him it will be ready to-morrow. If you think you are to be paid for doing nothing, you are mistaken."

Then, after a short silence, he added: "The deuce! One must strike the iron while it is hot."

Saint-Potin rose, saying: "I am ready."

Then Forestier, leaning back in his chair, as-

sumed a serious attitude in order to give his instructions, and turning to Duroy, said: "See here. Within the last two days the Chinese general, Li Theng Fao, has arrived at the Hôtel Continental, and the Rajah Taposahib Ramaderao Pali at the Hôtel Bristol. You will go and interview them." Turning to Saint-Potin, he continued: "Don't forget the main points I told you about. Ask the general and the rajah their opinion upon the action of England in the East, their ideas upon her system of colonization and domination, and their hopes respecting the intervention of Europe, and especially of France." He was silent for a moment, and then added in a theatrical aside: "It will be most interesting to our readers to learn at the same time what is thought in China and in India upon these matters which are of such intense interest at this moment." He continued, for the benefit of Duroy: "Watch how Saint-Potin sets to work; he is a capital reporter, and try to learn the trick of pumping a man dry in five minutes."

As soon as they had crossed the threshold, Saint-Potin began to laugh, and said to Duroy: "There's a bluffer for you. He even tried to bluff us. One would really think he took us for his readers."

They reached the boulevard, and the reporter observed: "Will you have a drink?"

"Certainly. It is awfully hot."

They turned into a café and ordered cooling drinks. Saint-Potin began to talk. He talked about the paper and every one connected with it with an abundance of astonishing details.

"The governor? A regular Jew.

"And yet a good fellow who believes in nothing, and does every one. His paper, which is Governmental, Catholic, Liberal, Republican, Orleanist,

pay your money and take your choice, was only started to help him in his speculations on the Bourse, and bolster up his other schemes. At that game he is very clever, and nets millions through companies without four sous of genuine capital.

"And he says things worthy of Balzac, the old shark. The other day I was in his room with that old tub, Norbert, and that Don Quixote, Rival, when Montelin, our business manager, came in with his morocco portfolio, that portfolio that every one in Paris knows, under his arm. Walter raised his head and asked, 'What news?' Montelin answered simply, 'I have just paid the sixteen thousand francs we owed the paper maker.' The governor gave a jump, an astonishing jump. 'What do you mean?' said he. 'I have just paid Monsieur Privas,' replied Montelin. 'But you are mad.' 'Why?' 'Why—why—why——' He took off his spectacles and wiped them. 'Why? Because we could have obtained a reduction of from four to five thousand francs.' Montelin replied, in astonishment: 'But, sir, all the accounts were correct, checked up by me and passed by yourself.' Then the governor, quite serious again, observed: 'What a fool you are! Don't you know, Monsieur Montelin, that one should always let one's debts mount up, in order to offer to compromise?'"

And Saint-Potin added, with a knowing shake of his head: "Eh! isn't that worthy of Balzac?"

Duroy had not read Balzac, but he replied: "By Jove, yes."

Then the reporter spoke of Madame Walter, an old goose; of Norbert de Varenne, an old failure; of Rival, a copy of Fervacques. Next he came to Forestier. "As to him, he has been lucky in marrying his wife, that is all."

Duroy asked: "What is his wife, really?"

Saint-Potin rubbed his hands. "Oh! a deep one, a smart woman. Comte de Vaudrec gave her a dowry and married her off."

Duroy suddenly felt a cold shiver run through him, a tingling of the nerves, a longing to smack this prattler on the face. But he merely interrupted him by asking:

"And your name is Saint-Potin?"

The other replied, simply enough:

"No, my name is Thomas. It is in the office that they have nicknamed me Saint-Potin."

Duroy, as he paid for the drinks, observed: "But it seems to me that time is getting on, and that we have two noble foreigners to call on."

Saint-Potin began to laugh. "You are still green. So you fancy that I am going to ask that Chinaman and that Hindoo what they think of England? As if I did not know better than themselves what they ought to think in order to please the readers of the *Vie Française*. I have already interviewed five hundred of these Chinese, Persians, Hindoos, Chilians, Japanese, and others. They all reply the same, according to me. I have only to take my article on the last comer and copy it word for word. What has to be changed, though, is their appearance, their names, their titles, their age, and their suite. Oh! on that point it does not do to make a mistake, for I should be snapped up sharp by the *Figaro* or the *Gaulois*. But on these matters the hall porters at the Hôtel Bristol and the Hôtel Continental will put me right in five minutes. We will smoke a cigar as we walk there. Five francs cab hire to charge to the paper. That is how one sets about it, my dear fellow, when one is practical."

"It must be worth something to be a reporter under these circumstances," said Duroy.

The journalist replied mysteriously: "Yes, but nothing pays so well as paragraphs, on account of the veiled advertisements."

They had got up and were passing down the boulevard toward the Madeleine. Saint-Potin suddenly observed to his companion: "You know if you have anything else to do, I shall not need you in any way."

Duroy shook hands and left him. The notion of the article to be written that evening worried him, and he began to think.

Having dined at a wine shop near the Arc de Triomphe, he walked slowly home along the outer boulevards and sat down at his table to work. But as soon as he had the sheet of blank paper before his eyes, all the materials that he had accumulated fled from his mind as though his brain had evaporated.

After an hour of effort, and five sheets of paper disfigured by opening phrases that had no continuation, he said to himself: "I am not yet broken in to the business. I must have another lesson." And all at once the prospect of another morning's work with Madame Forestier filled him with anticipation.

It was past ten when he rang his friend's bell.

The manservant replied: "Master is busy at work."

Duroy had not thought that the husband might be at home. He insisted, however, saying: "Tell him that I have called on a matter requiring immediate attention."

After waiting five minutes, he was shown into the study in which he had passed such a pleasant morning. In the chair he had occupied, Forestier

was now seated writing, while his wife in the same white gown leaned against the mantelpiece and dictated, cigarette in mouth.

Duroy, halting on the threshold, murmured: "I really beg your pardon; I am afraid I am disturbing you."

His friend, turning his face toward him—an angry face, too—growled: "What is it you want now? Be quick; we are pressed for time."

The intruder, taken aback, stammered: "It is nothing; I beg your pardon."

But Forestier, growing angry, exclaimed: "Come, hang it all, don't waste time about it; you have not forced your way in just for the sake of wishing us good morning, I suppose?"

Then Duroy, greatly perturbed, made up his mind.

"No—you see—the fact is—I can't quite manage my article—and you were—so—so kind last time—that I hoped—that I ventured to come——"

Forestier cut him short. "You have plenty of assurance. So you think I am to do your work, and that all you have to do is to call on the cashier at the end of the mouth to draw your screw? No; that is too good."

The young woman went on smoking without saying a word, and with a vague smile, which seemed like an amiable mask, concealing the irony of her thoughts.

Duroy, coloring up, stammered: "Excuse me—I thought——" Then suddenly, and in a clear voice, he went on: "I beg your pardon a thousand times, Madame, while again thanking you most sincerely for the charming article you produced for me yesterday." He bowed, remarked to Charles: "I shall be at the office at three;" and went out.

He walked home rapidly, grumbling: "Well, I will do it all alone, and they shall see——"

Scarcely had he got in than, excited by anger, he began to write. He continued the adventure begun by Madame Forestier, heaping up details of catch-penny romance, surprising incidents and inflated descriptions, with the style of a schoolboy and the phraseology of the barrack-room. Within an hour, he had finished an article which was a chaos of nonsense, and took it with every assurance to the *Vie Française*.

The first person he met was Saint-Potin, who, grasping his hand with the energy of an accomplice, said: "You have read my interview with the Chinese and the Hindoo? Isn't it funny? It has amused every one. And I did not even get a glimpse of them."

Duroy, who had not read anything, at once took up the paper and ran his eye over a long article, headed: "India and China," while the reporter pointed out the most interesting passages.

Forestier came in hurriedly, saying:

"Good; I want both of you." And he mentioned a number of political items that would have to be obtained that very afternoon. Duroy held out his article. "Here is the continuation about Algeria."

"Very good; hand it over and I will give it to the governor."

That was all.

Saint-Potin led away his new colleague, and when they were in the passage, he said to him. "Have you seen the cashier?"

"No; why?"

"Why? To draw your money. You see, you should always draw a month in advance. One never knows what may happen."

"Why—I ask for nothing better."

"I will introduce you to the cashier. He will make no difficulty about it. They pay well here."

Duroy went and drew his two hundred francs, with twenty-eight more for his article of the day before, which, added to what remained of his salary from the railway company, gave him three hundred and forty francs in his pocket. He had never owned such a sum, and thought himself possessed of wealth for an indefinite period.

When evening had come, Duroy, who had nothing more to do, thought of going again to the Folies-Bergère, and putting a bold face on it, went up to the box office.

"I am George Duroy, on the staff of the *Vie Française*. I came here the other day with Monsieur Forestier, who promised to see about my being given a pass. I do not know whether he has thought of it."

The list was referred to. His name was not entered. However, the box-office keeper, a very affable man, at once said: "You can go in all the same, sir, and write to the manager, who, I am sure, will attend to it."

He went in and almost immediately met Rachel, the woman he had met the first evening. She came up to him, saying: "Good evening, ducky. Are you quite well?"

"Very well, thanks; and you?"

"I am all right. Do you know I have dreamed of you twice since last time."

And, lifting her eyes toward the young man's moustache, she took his arm and leaned lovingly upon it.

"Let us go and have a grenadine first of all,"

she remarked. "And then we will take a stroll together. I should like to go to the Opéra like this, with you, to show you off."

* * * * * * *

It was broad day when he arose the next morning, and the notion occured to him to buy the *Vie Française*. He opened the paper with feverish hand. His article was not there, and he stood on the footpath, anxiously running his eye down the printed columns with the hope of at length finding what he was in search of. A weight suddenly oppressed his heart.

Entering the office some hours later, he went to see Monsieur Walter.

"I was surprised at not seeing my second article on Algeria in the paper this morning, sir," said he.

The manager raised his head, and replied in a dry tone: "I gave it to your friend Forestier, and asked him to read it through. He did not think it up to the mark; you must rewrite it."

Duroy, in a rage, went out without saying a word, and abruptly entering his old comrade's room, said: "Why didn't you let my article go in this morning?"

"The governor thought it poor, and told me to give it back to you to do over again. There it is." And he pointed to the copy, unfolded, beneath a paper weight.

Duroy, abashed, could find nothing to say in reply, and as he was putting his prose into his pocket, Forestier went on: "To-day you must first of all go to the police department." And he proceeded to give a list of business errands and items of news to be attended to.

Duroy went off without being able to think of

the cutting remark he wished to utter. He brought back his article the next day. It was returned to him again.

Having rewritten it a third time and finding it still refused, he understood that he was trying to go ahead too fast, and that Forestier's hand alone could help him on his way. He did not, therefore, say anything more about the "Souvenirs d'un Chasseur d'Afrique," but resolved to be adaptable and crafty, since it was necessary, and, while awaiting something better, to zealously discharge his duties as a reporter.

He became familiar with the secrets of theatrical and political life, with the waiting-rooms of statesmen and the lobby of the Chamber of Deputies; the important countenances of Cabinet officials, and the grim looks of sleepy doorkeepers. He was in continual communication with ministers, janitors, generals, police agents, princes, pimps, courtesans, ambassadors, bishops, priests, adventurers, men of fashion, card-sharpers, cab-drivers, waiters, and many others, having become the interested yet indifferent friend of all these; confounding them together in his estimation, measuring them with the same measure, judging them with the same eye, through having to see them every day at any hour, without any change of ideas, and to converse with them all on the same matter, bearing on his own business. He compared himself to a man who had to drink of samples of every kind of wine one after the other, and who would soon be unable to tell Château Margaux from Argenteuil.

He soon became a remarkable reporter. However, as he only got ten centimes a line in addition to his salary of two hundred francs a month, and as life on the boulevards and in cafés and restau-

rants is costly, he never had a penny, and was disgusted with his poverty. There must be some trick, he thought, as he saw some of his colleagues with their pockets full of money without ever being able to understand what secret methods they employed to procure this abundance. He enviously suspected unknown and suspicious transactions, services rendered, a whole system of graft carried on and tolerated. He would have to solve the mystery, enter into a tacit partnership, obtrude himself on the comrades who were dividing the spoils without him.

And of an evening, as he watched the trains go by from his window, he would think over the best method to attain this end.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST AFFAIR

TWO months had gone by, September was at hand, and the rapid fortune which Duroy had hoped for seemed to him slow in coming. He was, above all, distressed at the social mediocrity of his position, and did not see by what path he could scale the heights on which one finds respect, power, and money. He felt shut up in the middle-class calling of a reporter, so walled in as to be unable to get out of it. He was appreciated, but only in accordance with his position. Even Forestier, to whom he rendered a thousand services, no longer invited him to dinner, and treated him in every way as an inferior, though still accosting him as a friend.

From time to time, it is true, Duroy, seizing an opportunity, got in a short article, and having acquired through his news items a mastery over his

pen, and a tact which he lacked when he wrote his second article on Algeria, no longer ran any risk of having his descriptions of facts refused. But between this and drawing on his imagination for a story, or writing authoritatively on political questions, there was as great a difference as between driving in the Bois de Boulogne as the coachman or as the owner of the carriage. That which humiliated him above everything was to see the doors of society closed to him, not to meet people on equal terms, to be unable to have close friendships with those of the opposite sex, although several well-known actresses had occasionally received him with an interested familiarity.

He had often thought of calling on Madame Forestier, but the recollection of their last meeting checked and humiliated him; and, besides, he was awaiting an invitation to do so from her husband. Then the recollection of Madame de Marelle occurred to him, and recalling that she had asked him to come and see her, he called one afternoon when he had nothing to do.

"I am always at home till three o'clock," she had said.

He rang at the bell of her residence, a fourth floor in the Rue de Verneuil, at half-past two.

At the sound of the bell a servant opened the door, an untidy girl, who tied her cap-strings as she replied: "Yes, Madame is at home, but I don't know whether she is up."

And she pushed open the drawing-room door, which was ajar. Duroy went in. The room was fairly large, scantily furnished, and neglected-looking.

Duroy sat down immediately. He waited a long time. Then the door opened and Madame de Mar-

elle came running in, wearing a Japanese morning gown of rose-colored silk, embroidered with golden landscapes, blue flowers, and white birds.

"How good of you to come and see me!" she exclaimed. "I had made up my mind that you had forgotten me."

She held out both her hands with a delighted air, and Duroy, whom the commonplace appearance of the room had put at his ease, kissed one of them, as he had seen Norbert de Varenne do.

She begged him to sit down, and then, looking him over from head to foot, said: "How you have changed! You have improved in looks. Paris has done you good. Come, tell me the news."

And they began to gossip at once, as if they had been old acquaintances.

Suddenly Madame de Marelle exclaimed in astonishment: "It is strange how I get on with you. It seems to me as though I had known you for ten years. We shall become good friends, no doubt. Are you willing?"

He answered: "Certainly," with a smile which said still more.

She went on talking, each phrase sparkling with that ready wit of which she had acquired the habit, just as a workman acquires the knack needed to accomplish a task that seems difficult to others. He listened, thinking: "All this is worth remembering. A man could write charming articles of Paris gossip by getting her to chat over the events of the day."

Some one tapped softly, very softly, at the door by which she had entered, and she called out: "You can come in, pet."

Her little girl made her appearance, walked straight up to Duroy, and held out her hand to him.

The astonished mother murmured: "But this is a complete conquest. I no longer recognize her."

The young fellow, having kissed the child, made her sit down beside him, and with a serious manner asked her pleasant questions as to what she had been doing since they last met. She replied, in her little flutelike voice, with her grave and grown-up air.

The clock struck three, and the journalist rose.

"Come often," said Madame de Marelle, "and we will chat as we have done to-day; it will always give me pleasure. But how is it one no longer sees you at the Forestiers'?"

He replied: "Oh! for no special reason. I have been very busy. I hope to meet you there again one of these days."

He went out, his heart full of hope, though without knowing why.

He did not speak to Forestier of this visit. But he retained a recollection of it the following days, and more than the recollection.

He paid a second visit a few days later.

The maid ushered him into the drawing-room, and Laurine at once appeared. She no longer held out her hand, but her forehead, and said: "Mamma told me to request you to wait for her. She will be a quarter of an hour, because she is not dressed yet. I will keep you company."

Duroy, who was amused by the ceremonious manners of the little girl, replied: "Certainly, Mademoiselle. I shall be delighted to pass a quarter of an hour with you, but I warn you that for my part I am not at all serious, and that I play all day long, so I suggest a game of tag."

The girl was astounded; then she smiled as a woman would have done at this idea, which shocked

her a little as well as astonished her, and murmured: "Rooms are not meant to play in."

He said: "It is all the same to me. I play everywhere. Come, catch me."

And he began to run round the table, enticing her to come after him, which she did, smiling with a species of polite condescension. Suddenly, just as she thought she had got him, he seized her in his arms, and, lifting her to the ceiling, exclaimed: "Tag."

The delighted child wriggled her legs to escape, and laughed with all her heart.

Madame de Marelle came in at that moment, and was amazed. "What, Laurine, Laurine playing! You are a sorcerer, sir."

He put down the little girl, kissed her mother's hand, and they sat down with the child between them. They began to chat, but Laurine, usually so silent, kept taking all the while, and had to be sent to her room. She obeyed without a word, but with tears in her eyes.

As soon as they were alone Madame de Marelle lowered her voice. "You do not know, but I have a grand scheme, and I have thought of you. This is it. As I dine every week at the Forestiers', I return their hospitality from time to time at some restaurant. I do not like to entertain company at home; my household is not arranged for that, and, besides, I do not understand anything about domestic affairs. I like to live as I please. So I entertain them now and then at a restaurant, but it is not very lively when there are only we three, and my own acquaintances scarcely assimilate with them. I tell you all this in order to explain a somewhat irregular invitation. You understand, do you not, that I want you to make one of us on Saturday at

the Café Riche, at half-past seven. You know the place? ''

He accepted with pleasure, and she went on: '' There will be only four of us.''

He left her, retaining, as before, the sense of her continued presence as in a species of hallucination. And he awaited the day of the dinner with growing impatience.

Having hired, the second time, an evening suit —his funds not yet allowing him to buy one—he arrived first at the rendezvous, a few minutes before the time. He was ushered up to the second story, and into a small private dining room hung with red and white, its single window opening on to the boulevard. A square table, laid for four, displayed a white cloth, so shining that it seemed to be varnished, and glasses and silver that glittered brightly in the light of the twelve candles of two tall candelabra. He heard throughout the huge house a confused murmur, the murmur of a large restaurant, the clattering of glass and silver, the hurried steps of the waiters, deadened by the carpets in the passages, and the opening of doors, letting out the sound of voices from the numerous private rooms in which people were dining. Forestier came in and shook hands with him, with a cordial familiarity which he never displayed at the offices of the *Vie Française.*

'' The ladies are coming together,'' said he; '' these little dinners are very pleasant.''

Then he glanced at the table, turned off a gas jet that was turned low, closed one sash of the window on account of the draught, and chose a sheltered place for himself, with the remark: '' I must be careful; I have been better for a month, and now I feel worse again these last few days. I must have caught cold on Tuesday coming out of the theatre.''

The door was opened, and, followed by a waiter, the two ladies appeared.

As Duroy bowed to Madame Forestier she scolded him for not having come to see her again; then she added, with a smile in the direction of her friend: "I know what it is; you prefer Madame de Marelle; you can find time to visit her."

They sat down to table, and the waiter having handed the wine card to Forestier, Madame de Marelle exclaimed: "Give these gentlemen whatever they like, but for us iced champagne, the best, sweet champagne."

The Ostend oysters were brought in, tiny and plump, like little ears enclosed in shells, and melting between the tongue and the palate like salted bonbons. Then, after the soup, a trout was served, as rose-tinted as a young girl, and the guests began to talk.

They spoke at first of a current scandal. And then they began to talk of love. Without admitting it to be eternal, Duroy understood it as enduring, creating a bond, a tender friendship, a confidence. The union of the senses was only a seal to the union of hearts. But he was angry at the outrageous jealousies, melodramatic scenes, and unpleasantnesses which almost always accompany ruptures.

When he ceased speaking, Madame de Marelle replied: "Yes, it is the only good thing in life, and we often spoil it by preposterous unreasonableness."

Madame Forestier, who was toying with her knife, added: "Yes—yes—it is pleasant to be loved."

And she seemed to be carrying her dream farther, to be thinking things that she dared not give words to.

As the first entrée was slow in coming, they sipped from time to time a mouthful of champagne, and nibbled bits of crust. And the thought of love slowly intoxicated their souls, as the bright wine, rolling drop by drop down their throats, fired their blood and perturbed their minds.

The waiter brought in some lamb cutlets, delicate and tender, upon a thick layer of asparagus tips.

"Ah! this is good," exclaimed Forestier; and they ate slowly, enjoying the delicate meal and the vegetables as smooth as cream.

Duroy resumed: "For my part, when I love a woman, everything else in the world disappears." He said this in a tone of conviction.

Madame Forestier murmured, in her indifferent tone: "There is no happiness comparable to that of the first hand-clasp, when the one asks: 'Do you love me?' and the other replies, 'Yes.'"

Madame de Marelle, who had just tossed off a fresh glass of champagne, said gayly, as she put down her glass: "For my part, I am not so platonic."

And all began to smile with kindling eyes at these words.

Forestier, stretched out in his seat on the divan, rested his arms on the cushions, and said, in a serious tone: "This frankness does you honor, and proves that you are a practical woman."

And the conversation, descending from high-flown theories concerning love, strayed into the flowery garden of polite smut. The roast, consisting of partridges flanked by quails, had been served; then came green peas, and then a dish of *foies gras*, accompanied by a curly lettuce salad. They had partaken of all these things without distinguishing

their taste, without noticing it, solely preoccupied with their subject.

Dessert came, and then coffee; and the liqueurs produced a still greater warmth and agitation in their excited imaginations.

Cigarettes were lighted, and, all at once, Forestier began to cough. It was a terrible fit, that seemed to tear his chest, and with red face and forehead damp with perspiration, he choked behind his napkin. When the fit was over he growled angrily: "These feeds are very bad for me; they are stupid." All his good humor had vanished at the apprehension of illness that haunted his thoughts. "Let us go home," said he.

Madame de Marelle rang for the waiter, and asked for the bill. It was brought almost immediately. She tried to read it, but the figures danced before her eyes, and she passed it to Duroy, saying: "Here, pay for me; I can't see straight."

And at the same time she threw him her purse. The bill amounted to a hundred and thirty francs. Duroy checked it, and then handed over two notes and received back the change, saying in a low tone: "What shall I give the waiter?"

"What you like; I do not know."

He put five francs on the salver, and handed back the purse, saying: "Shall I see you to your door?"

"Certainly. I am incapable of finding my way alone."

They shook hands with the Forestiers, and Duroy called a cab. He felt through his sleeve the warmth of her shoulder, and he could find nothing to say to her, absolutely nothing, his mind being paralyzed by the imperative desire to seize her in his arms.

She did not speak either, but remained motionless in her corner. He would have thought that she was asleep if he had not seen her eyes gleam every time a ray of light entered the carriage.

"What was she thinking?" He felt that he must not speak, that a word, a single word, breaking this silence would destroy his chances.

But the cab having shortly stopped before the house in which they resided, Duroy had no time to seek passionate phrases to thank her and express his admiration. She did not stir. Duroy got out first to help her to alight.

At length she got out of the cab, and, without saying a word, he rang the bell, and as the door opened, said trembling: "When shall I see you again?"

She murmured so softly that he scarcely heard it: "Come and lunch with me to-morrow." And she disappeared in the entry, pushing to the heavy door, which closed with a noise like a cannon. He gave the driver five francs, and began to walk along with rapid and triumphant steps, and heart overflowing with joy.

He was somewhat agitated the next day as he ascended Madame de Marelle's staircase. How would she receive him? And supposing she should not receive him at all?

The little servant opened the door. She looked the same as usual. He felt reassured, as though he had expected the servant to look disturbed. He asked: "Is your mistress quite well?"

She replied: "Oh, yes, sir; the same as ever," and showed him into the drawing-room.

He went straight to the mirror to ascertain the state of his hair and his toilet, and was arranging his necktie before it, when he saw in it the young

woman watching him as she stood at the door leading from her room. He pretended not to have noticed her, and the pair looked at one another for a few moments in the glass, observing and watching before finding themselves face to face. He turned round. She had not moved, and seemed to be waiting. He darted forward, stammering: "My dear! my dear!"

She held out her arms and fell upon his breast; then, having raised her head toward him, their lips met.

"It is easier than I should have imagined," he thought. "It is all going on very well."

He smiled without saying a word, while striving to throw a world of love into his looks. She, too, smiled, with that smile with which women show their consent, and murmured: "We are alone. I have sent Laurine to lunch with one of her young friends."

"Thank you," he said. "I will worship you."

They sat down side by side on the sofa. He wanted to start a clever and attractive chat, but not being able to do so to his liking, stammered: "Then you are not too angry with me?"

She put her hand on his mouth, saying: "Be quiet."

They sat in silence, looking into one another's eyes.

The door opened, and the servant announced that luncheon was ready. Duroy gravely offered his arm.

They sat down opposite one another, continually gazing and smiling at each other, solely taken up with each other. They ate without knowing what they were eating. He felt a foot, a little foot, straying under the table. He took it between his

own and kept it there. The servant came and went, bringing and taking away the dishes with a careless air, without seeming to notice anything.

When they had finished they returned to the drawing-room, and resumed their place on the sofa, side by side. Little by little he drew closer to her, striving to take her in his arms. But she calmly repulsed him, saying: "Take care; some one may come in."

He murmured: "When can I see you quite alone, to tell you how I love you?"

She leaned over toward him, and whispered: "I will come and pay you a visit some of these days."

She named a day in the latter half of the week. He begged her to come sooner, playing with and squeezing her hands. She was amazed to see him implore her with such ardor, and took off a day at a time. But he kept repeating: "To-morrow, only say to-morrow."

She consented at length. "Yes, to-morrow. At five o'clock."

The sound of the doorbell made them start, and with a bound they separated to a distance. She murmured: "It must be Laurine."

The child made her appearance, stopped short in amazement, and then ran to Duroy, clapping her hands with pleasure at seeing him, and exclaiming: "Ah! Bel-Ami."

Madame de Marelle began to laugh. "What! Bel-Ami! Laurine has baptized you. It's a nice little nickname for you, and I will call you Bel-Ami, too."

He had taken the little girl on his knee, and he had to play with her all the games he had taught her. He rose to take his leave at twenty minutes to three, to go to the office, and on the staircase,

through the half-closed door, he still whispered: "To-morrow at five."

She answered: "Yes," with a smile, and disappeared.

As soon as he had got through his day's work he speculated how he should arrange his room, and hide as far as possible the poverty of the place. The idea struck him of pinning some little Japanese trifles on the walls, and he bought for five francs quite a collection of paper ornaments, little fans and screens, with which he hid the most glaring of the stains on the wall paper. He pasted on the window panes transparent pictures representing boats floating down rivers, flocks of birds flying across rosy skies, multi-colored ladies on balconies, and processions of little black men on plains covered with snow. His room soon looked like the inside of a Chinese lantern. He thought the effect satisfactory, and passed the evening in pasting on the ceiling birds that he cut out from the colored sheets remaining over. Then he went to bed.

He went home early the next day, carrying a paper bag of cakes and a bottle of Madeira, purchased at the grocer's.

Then he waited.

She came at about a quarter-past five; and, attracted by the bright colors of the pictures, exclaimed: "Why, how pretty your place is! But there are a great number of people on the stairs."

Her visit was a short one, and half an hour later he escorted her back to the cabstand in the Rue de Rome. When she was in the carriage he murmured: "Tuesday, at the same time."

As the driver whipped up his horse, she exclaimed: "Good-by, Bel-Ami;" and the old vehicle jagged along behind its old white horse.

For three weeks Duroy received Madame de Marelle in this way every two or three days, now in the afternoon and now in the morning. While he was expecting her one afternoon, a loud uproar on the stairs drew him to his door. A child was crying. A man's angry voice shouted: "What is that little devil howling about now?" The snapping, exasperated voice of a woman replied: "It is that woman who comes to see the penny-a-liner upstairs; she has upset Nicholas on the landing. It is people like that who pay no attention to children on the staircase."

Duroy drew back, distracted, for he could hear the quick rustling of skirts and a hurried step ascending the stairs to the floor beneath him. There was presently a knock at the door, which he had closed. He opened it, and Madame de Marelle rushed into the room, terrified and breathless, stammering: "Did you hear?"

He pretended to know nothing. "No; what?"

"How they have insulted me."

"Who? Who?"

"The wretches who live down below."

"Why no; what does it all mean? Tell me."

She began to sob, without being able to utter a word. He had to take off her bonnet and moisten her forehead with a wet towel. She was choking, and when her emotion had somewhat abated, all her wrathful indignation burst forth. She wanted him to go down at once to thrash them, to kill them.

He repeated: "But they are only working people, peasants. Just think, you would have to go to court. One cannot lower one's self to have anything to do with such people."

She passed on to another idea. "What shall

we do now? For my part, I cannot come here again."

He replied: "It is very simple; I will move."

She murmured: "Yes, but that will take some time." Then, all at once, she framed a plan, and, reassured, added softly: "No, I know what to do; let me act, do not trouble yourself about anything. I will send you a telegram to-morrow morning."

As he usually rose late, he was still in bed the next day, when about eleven o'clock he received the promised telegram. He opened it and read:

"Meet me at five, 127 Rue de Constantinople. Rooms hired by Madame Duroy. CLO."

At five o'clock to the minute he entered the janitor's room in a large furnished-room house, and asked: "Is this where Madame Duroy has taken rooms?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will show me to them, if you please."

The man, doubtless used to delicate situations in which prudence is necessary, looked him straight in the eyes, and then, selecting one of the long range of keys, said: "You are Monsieur Duroy?"

"Yes, certainly."

The man opened the door of a small, two-room apartment on the ground floor, opposite his own. The sitting room had a flowered wall paper, mahogany furniture covered with green rep with a yellow design, and a thin, flowered carpet through which one could feel the wooden flooring.

Duroy, uneasy and displeased, thought: "This place will cost goodness knows how much. I shall have to borrow again. It is idiotic, what she has done."

The door opened, and Clotilde came in like a

whirlwind, with outstretched arms and rustling skirts. She was delighted. "Isn't it nice, eh? Isn't it nice? And on the ground floor, too; no stairs to go up."

He kissed her coldly, not daring to put the question that rose to his lips. She had placed a large parcel on the little round table in the middle of the room. And she played at moving in, finding a place for everything, and deriving great amusement from it.

"It will be very convenient. If I get wet, for instance, while I am out, I can run in here to dry myself. We shall each have a key, besides the one left with the doorkeeper, in case we forget it. I have taken the place for three months, in your name, of course, since I could not give my own."

Then he said: "You will let me know when the rent is to be paid."

She replied simply: "But it is paid, dear."

"Then I owe it you?"

"No, no, my dear; this is a little fancy of my own."

He seemed annoyed. "Oh, no, indeed; I can't allow that."

She implored him, but he held out, refusing with an irritated air, and then he yielded, thinking that, after all, it was fair. And when she had gone, he murmured, rubbing his hands, and without inquiring in the depths of his heart why he thought so: "She is very interesting."

He received, a few days later, another telegram:

"My husband returns to-night after six weeks' inspection, so we shall have a week off. Clo."

Durov felt astounded. He no longer thought of her as being married. But here was a man whose

face he would have liked to see just once, in order to know him. He patiently awaited the husband's departure, but he passed two evenings at the Folies-Bergère, which wound up with Rachel.

Then, one morning, came a fresh telegram:

"To-day at five. CLO."

When they met, she said: "If you like, you may take me to dinner somewhere. I have kept myself disengaged."

It was the beginning of the month, and although he had some time before drawn his salary in advance, and was living from day to day upon money gleaned on every side, Duroy happened to be in funds, and was pleased at the opportunity of spending something upon her.

They started off, therefore, about seven, and gained the outer boulevard. She leaned on his arm, and whispered in his ear: "If you only knew how happy it makes me to walk out on your arm; how I love to feel you beside me."

He said: "Would you like to go to Père Lathuile's?"

"Oh, no; it is too swell. I should like something funny, out of the way; a restaurant that salesmen and working-girls go to. I adore dining at a country inn. Oh, if we had only been able to go into the country."

As he knew no such place in the neighborhood, they wandered along the boulevard, and ended by going into a wine shop where there was a dining-room. She had seen through the windows two bare-headed girls seated at table with two soldiers. Three cab drivers were dining at the farther end of the long and narrow room, and an individual, impossible to classify under any calling, was smok-

ing, stretched on a chair, with his legs stuck out in front of him, his hands in the waistband of his trousers, and his head thrown back over the top bar. His jacket was a museum of stains, and in its swollen pockets could be noted the neck of a bottle, a piece of bread, a parcel wrapped up in a newspaper, and a dangling piece of string. He had thick, tangled, curly hair, covered with dandruff, and his cap was on the floor, under his chair.

The entrance of Clotilde created a sensation, due to the elegance of her toilet. The two couples ceased whispering together, the three cab drivers left off arguing, and the man who was smoking, having taken his pipe from his mouth and expectorated, turned his head slightly to look.

Madame de Marelle murmured: "It is very nice; we shall be very comfortable here. Another time I will dress like a working-girl." And she sat down, without embarrassment or disgust, before the greasy wooden table, shiny from grease, washed by spilt liquors, and streaky from a hurried wipe with the waiter's napkin. Duroy, somewhat ill at ease and slightly ashamed, sought a peg to hang his hat on. Not finding one, he put it on a chair.

They had a ragout, a slice of melon, and a salad. Clotilde repeated: "I delight in this. I have low tastes. I like this better than the Café Anglais." Then she added: "If you want to complete my enjoyment, you will take me to a dancing place. I know a very funny one close by, called the Reine Blanche."

Duroy, surprised at this, asked: "Whoever could have taken you there?"

He looked at her and saw her blush, somewhat disturbed, as though his sudden question aroused within her some delicate recollections. After one

of those feminine hesitations, so short that they can scarcely be guessed, she replied: "A friend of mine," and then, after a brief silence, added, "who is dead." And she cast down her eyes with a very natural sadness.

Duroy, for the first time, thought of all that he did not know as regarded the past life of this woman. A vague jealousy, a species of enmity, awoke within him; an enmity against all that he did not know. He looked at her, irritated at the mystery wrapped up within that pretty, silent head, which was thinking, perhaps, at that very moment, of the other, the others, regretfully. How he would have liked to have looked into her recollections—to have known all.

She repeated: "Will you take me to the Reine Blanche? That will be a perfect treat."

He thought: "What matters the past? I am very foolish to bother about it," and smilingly replied: "Certainly, darling." When they were in the street she resumed, in that low and mysterious tone in which confidences are made: "I dared not ask you this until now, but you cannot imagine how I love these escapades in places ladies do not go to. During the carnival I will dress up as a schoolboy. I make such a capital boy."

When they entered the ballroom she kept close to him, gazing with delighted eyes on the young people, and from time to time, as though to secure herself from any possible danger, saying, as she noticed some serious and motionless police officer: "That is a strong-looking fellow." In a quarter of an hour she had had enough of it, and he escorted her home.

Then began quite a series of expeditions to all the queer places where the populace amuse them-

selves, and Duroy saw that she had quite a liking for this vagabondage of students bent on a spree. She came to their meeting place in a cotton frock and a servant's cap—a theatrical servant's cap—on her head; and despite the elegant and studied simplicity of her toilet, she retained her rings, her bracelets, and her diamond earrings, saying, when he begged her to remove them: "Bah! They will think they are paste."

She thought she was admirably disguised, and although she was really only concealed after the fashion of an ostrich, she went into drinking-places of the worst repute. She wanted Duroy to dress himself like a workman, but he resisted, and retained his correct attire, not even consenting to exchange his tall hat for one of soft felt. She consoled herself for his obstinacy by the reflection that she would be taken for a chambermaid engaged in a love affair with a gentleman, and thought this delightful. In this guise they went into popular wine shops, and sat down on rickety chairs at old wooden tables in smoke-filled rooms. A cloud of rank tobacco smoke, blended with the odor of fried fish remaining from dinner, filled the room; men in blouses shouted at one another as they tossed off *petits verres;* and the astonished waiter stared at this strange couple as he placed before them two cocktails. Trembling, half-afraid, and yet charmed, she began to sip the red liquid, looking round her with uneasy and kindling eye. Each cherry she swallowed gave her the sensation of a sin committed, each drop of the burning liquor flowing down her throat gave her the enjoyment as of a forbidden pleasure.

Then she would say: "Let us go," and they would leave. She would pass rapidly, with bent

head and the short steps of an actress leaving the stage, among the drinkers, who, with their elbows on the tables, watched her go by with suspicious and dissatisfied glances; and when she had crossed the threshold she would give a deep sigh, as if she had just escaped some terrible danger.

Sometimes she asked Duroy, with a shudder: "If I were insulted in these places, what would you do?"

He would answer, with a swaggering air: "Take your part, *parbleu!*"

And she would clasp his arm with happiness, with, perhaps, a vague wish to be insulted and defended, to see men fight on her account, even such men as those, with her admirer.

But these outings, taking place two or three times a week, began to weary Duroy, who had found it difficult to raise the ten francs necessary for the cake and the drinks. He now had great difficulty in making his expenses, more so than when he was a clerk in the Northern Railway; for having spent lavishly during his first months of journalism, in the constant hope of gaining large sums in a day or two, he had exhausted all his resources and all means of procuring money. A very simple method, that of borrowing from the cashier, was very soon exhausted; and he already owed the paper four months' salary, besides six hundred francs advanced for work. He owed, besides, a hundred francs to Forestier, three hundred to Jacques Rival, who was generous with his money; and he was also harassed by a number of small debts of from five francs to twenty. Saint-Potin, consulted as to the means of raising another hundred francs, had discovered no expedient, although a man of inventive mind, and Duroy was exasper-

ated at this poverty, of which he was more sensible now than formerly, since he had more wants. A sullen rage against every one smouldered within him, and an ever-increasing irritation, which manifested itself at the most trivial causes. He sometimes asked himself how he could have spent an average of a thousand francs a month, without any extras or any foolish extravagances, and he found that, with a luncheon at eight francs and a dinner at twelve, partaken of in some large café on the boulevards, he soon got rid of a louis, which, added to ten francs pocket money—that pocket money that melts away, one does not know how—makes a total of thirty francs. But thirty francs a day is nine hundred francs at the end of the month. And he did not reckon in this the cost of clothes, boots, linen, washing, etc.

So on the 14th December he found himself without a sou in his pocket, and without the slightest idea how to get any money. He went without luncheon, and passed the afternoon working at the newspaper office, cross and preoccupied. About four o'clock he received a telegram from Madame de Marelle:

"Shall we dine together and have a lark afterward?"

He at once replied: "Cannot dine." Then he reflected that he would be very stupid to deprive himself of the pleasant moments she might afford him, and added: "But will await you at nine at our place." And, having sent one of the messengers with this, to save the cost of a telegram, he began to reflect what he should do to procure himself a dinner.

At seven o'clock he had not yet hit upon anything, and felt terribly empty. Then, in despair,

he resorted to strategy. He let all his colleagues depart, one after the other, and when he was alone, rang sharply. Monsieur Walter's messenger, left in charge of his office, came in. Duroy was standing, feeling in his pockets, and said in an abrupt voice: "Foucart, I have left my purse at home, and I have to go and dine at the Luxembourg. Lend me fifty sous for my cab."

The man took three francs from his waistcoat pocket, and said: "Do you want any more, sir?"

"No, no, that will be enough. Thanks."

And, having seized the coins, Duroy ran downstairs and dined at a popular-price restaurant to which he drifted on his days of poverty.

At nine o'clock he was awaiting Madame de Marelle, with his feet on the fender, in the little sitting room. She came in, lively and animated, from the keen air of the street. "If you like," said she, "we will first go for a stroll. The weather is splendid for walking."

He replied, in a grumbling tone: "Why go out? We are very comfortable here."

She said, without taking off her bonnet: "If you knew, the moonlight is beautiful. It is splendid walking about to-night."

"Perhaps so, but I do not care for walking about!"

He had said this in an angry fashion. She was struck and hurt by it, and asked: "What is the matter with you? Why do you act like that? I should like to go for a stroll, and I don't see why that should annoy you."

He got up in a rage. "It does not annoy me. It is a bother, that is all."

She was a woman whom resistance irritated and impoliteness exasperated, and she said disdainfully

and with angry calm: "I am not accustomed to be spoken to like that. I will go alone, then. Good-by."

He saw that it was serious, and darting toward her, seized her hands, saying: "Forgive me, forgive me. I am very nervous this evening, very irritable. I have had vexations and annoyances, you know—matters of business."

She replied, somewhat softened, but not calmed down:

"That does not concern me, and I will not bear the brunt of your ill temper."

"Listen, darling. I did not want to hurt you; I was not thinking of what I was saying."

He had forced her to sit down, and kneeling before her, went on: "Have you forgiven me? Tell me you have forgiven me!"

She murmured coldly: "Very well, but do not do so again;" and rising, she added: "Now let us go for a stroll."

He stammered: "Clo, my little Clo, I have a reason."

She stopped, and, looking him full in the face, said:

"You are lying. What is the reason?"

He caught her by the shoulders, and, in despair, ready to acknowledge anything in order to avoid a rupture, he said in a despairing tone: "I have not a sou. That is the reason."

She stopped short, and looking into his eyes to read the truth in them, said: "What do you say?"

He had flushed up to the roots of his hair. "I say that I have not a sou. Do you understand? Not twenty sous, not ten, not enough to pay for a glass of liqueur in any café we may go into. You

force me to confess what I am ashamed of. It was, however, impossible for me to go out with you, and when we were seated with refreshments before us to tell you quietly that I could not pay for them."

She was still looking him in the face. "Well—is it all true?"

In a moment he had turned out all his pockets, those of his trousers, coat, and waistcoat, and murmured: "There, are you satisfied now?"

Suddenly opening her arms, in an outburst of passion, she threw them around his neck, crying: "Oh, my poor boy, if I had only known. How did it happen?"

She made him sit down, and obliged him to tell her how this misfortune had come about.

He invented a touching story. He had been obliged to assist his father, who had got into difficulties. He had not only handed over to him all his savings, but had even incurred heavy debts on his behalf. He added: "I shall have to starve for at least six months, for I have exhausted all my resources. It cannot be helped; there are crises in every life. Money, after all, is not worth troubling about."

She whispered: "I will lend you some; will you let me?"

He answered, with dignity: "You are very kind, pet; but do not think of that, I beg of you. You would hurt my feelings."

She was silent for some time, and then she remarked smilingly: "How nice it is when one is in your position to find money you had forgotten in your pocket—a coin that had got in between the cloth and the lining."

He replied in a tone of conviction: "Ah, yes, indeed!"

She insisted on walking home, under the pretence that the moon was beautiful, and went into ecstasies over it. It was a cold, still night at the beginning of winter. Pedestrians and horses went by quickly, spurred by a sharp frost. Heels rang on the pavement.

As she left him she said: "Shall we meet again the day after to-morrow?"

"Certainly."

"At the same time."

"Good-by, dearest."

Then he walked home rapidly, wondering what he could think up on the morrow to help him out of his difficulty. But as he opened the door of his room, and fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for a match, he was stupefied to find a coin under his fingers. As soon as he struck a light he hastened to examine it. It was a louis. He thought he had gone crazy. He turned it over and over, wondering by what miracle it could have found its way there. It certainly could not have fallen from heaven into his pocket.

Then, all at once, he guessed, and he went to bed, his heart filled with anger and humiliation.

He woke late. He was hungry. He tried to go to sleep again, in order not to get up till two o'clock, and then said to himself: "That will not forward matters. I must end by finding some money." Then he went out, hoping that an idea might occur to him in the street. It did not, but at every restaurant he passed a longing to eat made his mouth water. As by noon he had failed to hit on any plan, he suddenly made up his mind: "I will pay for breakfast out of Clotilde's twenty francs. That will not hinder me from paying her back to-morrow."

He therefore lunched for two francs fifty centimes. On reaching the office, he also gave three francs to the messenger, saying: "Here, Foucart, here is the money you lent me last night for my cab."

He worked till seven o'clock. Then he went and dined, taking another three francs. The two evening bocks brought the expenditure of the day up to nine francs thirty centimes. But as he could not get any more credit or create fresh resources in twenty-four hours, he borrowed another six francs fifty centimes the next day from the twenty he was going to return that very evening, so that he came to keep his appointment with just four francs twenty centimes in his pocket.

He was in a deuce of a temper, and promised himself that he would pretty soon explain things. He would say to Madame de Marelle: "You know, I found the twenty francs you slipped into my pocket the other day. I cannot give them back to you now, because my situation is unaltered, and I have not had time to occupy myself with money matters. But I will give them you the next time we meet."

She came in, anxious, full of alarm. How would he receive her?

He said to himself: "It will be time enough to enter into the matter by and by. I will find an opportunity of doing so."

He did not find the opportunity, and said nothing, shrinking from broaching this delicate subject. She did not speak of going out, and was in every way charming. They separated early, after making an appointment for the Wednesday of the following week, for Madame de Marelle was engaged to dine out several days in succession.

The next day, as Duroy, on paying for his break-

fast, felt for the four remaining coins, he perceived that there were five, and one of them a gold one. At first he thought that he had received it by mistake in his change the day before; then he understood it, and his heart throbbed with humiliation at this persistent charity. How he regretted not having said anything! If he had spoken energetically, this would not have happened.

For four days he made efforts, as numerous as they were fruitless, to raise five louis, and spent Clotilde's second coin. Although he had said to her savagely: "Don't play that joke of the other evenings again, or I shall get angry," she managed to slip another twenty francs into his pocket the next time they met.

When he found them he swore bitterly, and transferred them to his waistcoat to have them under his hand, for he had not a sou. He appeased his conscience by this argument: "I will give it her all back in a lump. After all, it is only borrowed money and can be repaid."

At length the cashier at the newspaper office agreed, on his urgent appeal, to let him have five francs daily. It was just enough to live upon, but not enough to repay sixty francs with. But as Clotilde was again seized with a passion for nocturnal expeditions to all the suspicious localities in Paris, he ended by not being unbearably annoyed at finding a yellow coin in one of his pockets, one even in his boot, and another time in his watch-case, after these escapades.

One evening she said to him: "Would you believe that I have never been to the Folies-Bergère? Will you take me there?"

He hesitated a moment, afraid of meeting Rachel. Then he thought: "Bah! I am not mar-

ried, after all. If that girl sees me, she will understand the state of things, and will not speak to me. Besides, we will have a box."

He had another reason for his decision. He was well pleased at this opportunity of offering Madame de Marelle a box at the theater without its costing anything. It was a kind of compensation.

They went in, and were received with bows by the acting manager. An immense crowd filled the foyer, and they had great difficulty in making their way through the swarm of men and women. At length they reached their box and settled themselves in it, shut in between the motionless orchestra and the restless gallery.

Suddenly she said: "There is a stout, dark girl who keeps watching us all the time. I thought just now that she was going to speak to us. Did you notice her?"

He answered: "No, you must be mistaken." But he had already noticed her. It was Rachel, who was walking up and down past their box, with anger in her eyes and hard words upon her lips.

Duroy had brushed against her in making his way through the crowd, and she had whispered: "Good evening," with a wink which signified, "I understand." But he did not reply to this mark of attention, for fear of being seen by Madame de Marelle, and he had passed on coldly, with haughty look and disdainful lips. The woman, incited by unconscious jealousy, turned back, brushed against him again, and said in louder tones: "Good evening, George." He had not answered even then. Then she had made up her mind to be recognized and greeted, and she kept continually passing the box, awaiting a favorable moment.

As soon as she saw that Madame de Marelle

was looking at her, she touched Duroy's shoulder, saying: "Good evening; are you quite well?"

He made an angry movement, and exclaimed in exasperated tones: "What do you mean by speaking to me? Be off, or I will have you locked up."

Then, with fiery eye and swelling bosom, she screamed out: "So that's it, is it? Ah, you scamp! It is no reason because you are with some one else that you should cut me to-day. If you had only nodded to me when I passed you just now, I should have left you alone. But you wanted to put on airs. I'll pay you out! Ah! so you won't say good evening when you meet me?"

She would have gone on for a long time, but Madame de Marelle had opened the door of the box and fled through the crowd, blindly seeking the way out. Duroy darted after her, and strove to rejoin her, while Rachel, seeing them flee, yelled triumphantly: "Stop her, stop her; she has stolen my sweetheart!"

Every one began to laugh. Two gentlemen, in joke, seized the fugitive by the shoulders and sought to bring her back. But Duroy, having caught up with her, freed her forcibly and led her away into the street. She jumped into an empty cab standing at the door. He jumped in after her, and when the driver asked, "Where to, sir?" replied, "Wherever you like!"

The cab slowly moved off, jolting over the cobble stones. Clotilde, seized by a kind of hysterical attack, sat choking and gasping, with her hands covering her face, and Duroy neither knew what to do nor what to say. At last, as he heard her sobbing, he stammered out:

"Clo, just listen; let me explain. It is not my

fault. I used to know that woman some time ago, you know——"

She suddenly took the hands from her face, and overcome by the wrath of a loving and deceived woman, a furious wrath that enabled her to recover her speech, she stammered out in rapid, broken sentences: "Oh, you wretch—you wretch—what a scoundrel you are! Can it be possible? How shameful! Oh, *mon Dieu!* How shameful!"

Suddenly she leaned out of the window, and, catching the driver by the sleeve, cried: "Stop!" And opening the door, sprang out.

George wanted to follow, but she cried: "I forbid you to get out!" in such loud tones that the passers-by began to gather about her, and Duroy did not move, for fear of a scandal. She then took her purse from her pocket and looked for some change by the light of the cab lantern, and taking out two francs fifty centimes, she put them in the driver's hand, saying in ringing tones:

"There is your fare. I am paying you, and now take this blackguard to the Rue Boursault, Batignolles."

Those surrounding her began to laugh. A gentleman said: "Well done, little woman," and a young scalawag standing close to the cab thrust his head into the door and sang out in shrill tones:

"Good night, lovey!"

Then the cab started off again, followed by a burst of laughter.

CHAPTER VI

A LONG STEP FORWARD

DUROY woke up crestfallen the next morning. He dressed himself slowly, and then sat down at his window and began to reflect. He felt a kind of aching sensation all over, just as though he had received a drubbing over night. At last the necessity of finding some money spurred him up, and he went first to Forestier.

His friend received him in his study, sitting before the fire.

"What has brought you out so early?" said he.

"A very serious matter, a debt of honor."

"At play?"

He hesitated a moment, and then said: "At play."

"Heavy?"

"Five hundred francs."

He only owed two hundred and eighty.

Forestier, skeptical on the point, inquired: "Whom do you owe it to?"

Duroy could not answer right off. "To—to—a Monsieur de Carleville."

"Ah! and where does he live?"

"At—at——"

Forestier began to laugh. "Number naught, Nowhere Street, eh? I know that gentleman, my dear fellow. If you want twenty francs, I have still that much at your service, but no more."

Duroy took the proffered louis. Then he went from house to house among the people he knew, and wound up by having collected at about five o'clock the sum of eighty francs. As he still needed two hundred more, he came to a decision, and keeping for himself what he had thus gleaned, murmured: "Bah! I am not going to put myself out. I will pay her when I can."

For a fortnight he lived regularly, economically, and chastely, his mind filled with good resolves. This sudden reformation did not last long, and he went one evening to the Folies-Bergère, in the hope of finding Rachel. He caught sight of her directly he entered, for she scarcely went anywhere else. He went up to her, smiling, with outstretched hand; but she merely looked him down from head to foot, saying: "What do you want with me?"

He tried to laugh it off, with: "Come, don't be stuck up."

She turned on her heel, saying: "I don't associate with men of your stamp."

She had picked out the bitterest insult. He felt the blood rush to his face, and went home alone.

Forestier, ill, weak, always coughing, led him a hard life at the paper, and seemed to rack his brain

to find him tiresome jobs. One day, even, in a moment of nervous irritation, and after a long fit of choking, as Duroy had not brought him a piece of information he wanted, he growled out: "Confound it! You are a bigger fool than I thought."

The other almost struck him, but restrained himself, and went away muttering: "I'll manage to pay you out some day." An idea occurred to him, and he added: "I'll make a fool of you, old fellow!" And he took himself off, rubbing his hands, delighted at this project.

He resolved to pay Madame Forestier a visit, to spy out the land. He found her reclining on a couch, reading a book. She held out her hand, without rising, merely turning her head, and said: "Good day, Bel-Ami!"

He felt as though he had received a blow. "Why do you call me that?" he said.

She replied, with a smile: "I saw Madame de Marelle the other day, and learned how you had been baptized at her place."

He felt reassured by her amiable air. Besides, what was there for him to fear?

She resumed: "You spoil her. As to me, people come to see me when they think of it—the thirty-sixth of the month, or thereabout."

He sat down near her, and regarded her with a new species of curiosity, the curiosity of the amateur who is bargain-hunting.

He said resolutely: "I did not come to see you because it was better so."

She asked, without understanding: "What? Why?"

"Why? Cannot you guess?"

"No, not at all."

" Because I am afraid that I might fall in love with you."

She seemed neither astonished, nor shocked, nor flattered; she went on smiling the same indifferent smile, and replied with the same tranquillity: " Oh, you can come, all the same. No one is in love with me long."

He was surprised more by the tone than the words, and asked: " Why not? "

" Because it is useless. I let this be understood at once. If you had told me of your fear before, I should have reassured you, and invited you, on the contrary, to come as often as possible."

He exclaimed, in a pathetic tone: " Can we command our feelings? "

She turned toward him: " My dear friend, for me a man in love is struck off the list at once. He becomes idiotic, and not only idiotic, but dangerous. I cease all relations with people who are in love with me, or who pretend to be so—because they bore me, in the first place; and, secondly, because they are as much objects of suspicion to me as a mad dog, which may have a fit of biting. I therefore put them into a kind of moral quarantine until the attack is over. Do not forget this. I know very well that in your case love is only a species of appetite, while with me it would be, on the contrary, a kind of—of—of communion of souls which does not enter into a man's religion. You understand its letter, I its spirit. But look me well in the face." She no longer smiled. Her face was calm and cold, and she continued emphatically: "And now that we understand each other, will you agree to be friends—good friends—real friends, I mean, without any mental reservation? "

He made up his mind at once, and, delighted at

being able to secure this ally in the battle of life, held out both hands, saying: "I am yours, Madame —Bel-Ami."

She read the sincerity of his intention in his voice, and gave him her hands. He kissed them both, one after the other, and then said simply, as he raised his head: "Ah! if I had found a woman like you, how gladly I would have married her."

She was touched this time—soothed by this phrase as women are by the compliments which reach their hearts, and she gave him one of those rapid and grateful looks which make us their slaves. Then, as he could find no change of subject to renew the conversation, she said softly, laying her finger on his arm: "And I am going to play my part of a friend at once. You are clumsy." She hesitated a moment, and then asked: "May I speak plainly?"

"Yes."

"Quite plainly?"

"Quite."

"Well, go and see Madame Walter, who greatly appreciates you, and do your best to please her. You will find a place there for your compliments, although she is, you understand me, a perfectly virtuous woman. Oh, there is no hope for poachers there. You may find something better, though, by going about more. I know that you still hold a subordinate position on the paper. But do not be afraid; they receive all their staff with the same kindness. Go there, take my advice."

He said, with a smile: "Thank you; you are an angel, a guardian angel."

They spoke of one thing and another. He stayed some time, wishing to prove that he took pleasure in being with her, and on leaving, re-

marked: "It is understood, then, that we are friends."

"It is understood."

As he had noted the effect of the compliment he had paid her shortly before, he seconded it by adding: "And if ever you become a widow, I enter the lists."

Then he hurried away, so as not to give her time to get angry.

A visit to Madame Walter was rather awkward for Duroy, for he had not been invited to call, and he did not want to commit a blunder.

One day, however, having risen early, he went to the market, and for ten francs obtained a score of splendid pears. Having carefully packed them in a hamper to make it appear that they had come from a distance, he left them with the concierge at Madame Walter's, with his card, on which he had written: "George Duroy begs Madame Walter to accept a little fruit which he received this morning from Normandy."

He found the next morning, among his letters at the office, an envelope in reply, containing the card of Madame Walter, who "thanked Monsieur George Duroy, and was at home every Saturday."

On the following Saturday he called. Monsieur Walter lived on the Boulevard Malesherbes, in a double house, which he owned, part of which he rented to another family.

Two footmen were dozing on benches. One of them took Duroy's overcoat and the other relieved him of his cane, opened a door, advanced a few steps in front of his visitor, and then, drawing aside, let him pass, calling out his name, into an empty room.

The young fellow, somewhat embarrassed,

looked around on all sides, when he perceived in a mirror some people sitting down, who seemed very far off. He passed through two empty reception rooms, and reached a sort of small boudoir hung with blue silk, where four ladies were chatting round a table on which were cups of tea. In spite of the assurance he had acquired during his residence in Paris, and, above all, in his career as a reporter, which constantly brought him in contact with important personages, Duroy felt somewhat abashed at the elegance of the house and at having to walk through the deserted drawing-rooms. He stammered: "Madame, I have ventured," as his eyes sought the mistress of the house.

She held out her hand, which he took with a bow, and having remarked: "You are very kind, sir, to call and see me," she pointed to a chair, into which he almost fell, being deceived as to its height.

They had become silent. One of the ladies began to talk again.

Madame Walter noticed that Duroy had not said anything, that he had not been spoken to, and that he seemed slightly ill at ease; and as the ladies were still conversing about the Academy, that favorite subject always occupying them some time, she said: "And you, who should be better informed than any one, Monsieur Duroy, who is your favorite?"

He replied unhesitatingly: "In this matter, Madame, I should never consider the merit, always disputable of the candidates, but their age and their state of health. I should not ask about their credentials, but their disease. I should not seek to learn whether they have made a metrical translation of Lope de Vega, but I should take care to obtain information as to the state of their liver and other organs. For me, a good hypertrophy, a good

aneurism, and, above all, a good beginning of locomotor ataxia, would be a hundred times more valuable than forty volumes of digressions on the idea of patriotism as embodied in barbaric poetry."

An astonished silence followed this opinion, and Madame Walter asked, with a smile: "But why?"

He replied: "Because I never look for anything but the enjoyment that ladies derive from a subject. Now, Madame, the Academy only has any real interest for you when an Academician dies. The more of them that die the happier you are. But in order that they may die quickly, they must be elected when they are infirm or old." As they all seemed somewhat surprised, he continued: "I am like you; I like to read of the death of an Academician. I at once ask myself: 'Who will replace him?' And I draw up my list. It is a game, a very pretty little game that is played in all Parisian salons at the decease of each of the Immortals, the game of 'Death and the Forty Ancients.'"

The ladies, still slightly disconcerted, began, however, to smile, so true were his remarks. He concluded, as he rose: "It is you who really elect them, ladies, and you only elect them to see them die. Choose them old, therefore, very old, as old as possible, and do trouble yourselves about anything else."

He then retired very gracefully. As soon as he was gone, one of the ladies said: "He is very comical, that young fellow. Who is he?"

Madame Walter replied: "One of our staff who attends to minor work, but I feel sure that he will get on."

Duroy strode gayly down the Boulevard Malesherbes, pleased at his first attempt, and murmuring: "A capital start."

He made it up with Rachel that evening.

The following week two things happened to him. He was made news editor-in-chief, and invited to dinner at Madame Walter's. He traced at once a connection between these things.

Monsieur Walter, who thoroughly appreciated him, had, however, often wished for another man to whom to intrust the "Echoes," which he held to be the very marrow of the paper. It is through them that rumors are set afloat, and the public and the funds influenced. It is necessary to know how to slip the all-important matter, rather hinted at than said right out, in between the description of two fashionable entertainments, without appearing to intend it. Things should be hinted at in such a manner as to allow of any construction being placed on them, refuted in a manner that confirms the rumor, or affirmed in such a way that no one believes them.

Monsieur Boisrenard, who had the skill acquired by long practice, nevertheless lacked virility and elegance; he lacked, above all, the inborn tact required in order to read the manager's mind day by day. Duroy could do it to perfection, and was an admirable addition to the staff. The wire-pullers and real editors of the *Vie Française* were half a dozen deputies, interested in all the speculations brought out or backed up by the manager. They were known in the Chamber as "Walter's gang," and envied because they gained money with him and through him. Forestier, the political editor, was only the man of straw of these men of business, the worker-out of ideas suggested by them. They prompted his editorials on the money markets, which he always wrote at home, where he could be quiet, he said.

Duroy was jubilant at his appointment as editor of the "Echoes," when he received a printed card on which he read: "Monsieur and Madame Walter request the pleasure of Monsieur George Duroy's company at dinner on Thursday, January 20." This new mark of favor, following on the other, filled him with such joy that he kissed the invitation as he would have kissed a love letter. Then he went in search of the cashier, to deal with the important question of money. The news editor on a Paris paper generally has his budget out of which he pays his reporters for the intelligence, important or trifling, brought in by them, as gardeners bringing in their fruits to a dealer. Twelve hundred francs a month were alloted at the outset to Duroy, who proposed to himself to retain a considerable share of it. The cashier, on his urgent representation, ended by advancing him four hundred francs. He had at first intended to send Madame de Marelle the two hundred and eighty francs he owed her, but he almost immediately reflected that he would only have a hundred and twenty left, a sum utterly insufficient to carry on his new duties in suitable fashion, and so put off this restitution to a future day.

It took him a couple of days to settle down in his new position, for he had inherited a table to himself, and a set of pigeonholes in the large room occupied by the entire editorial staff. He occupied his spare time playing cup and ball. Duroy had acquired a taste for this amusement, and was beginning to get expert at it, under the guidance, and thanks to the advice of, Saint-Potin.

"One—two—three—four—five—six." It happened that, for the first time, he spiked the ball twenty times running, the very day that he was to dine at Madame Walter's. "A good day," he

and was going up the Rue de Londres, when he saw, trotting along in front of him, a little woman whose figure recalled that of Madame de Marelle. He felt his cheeks flush, and his heart began to beat. He crossed the road to get a view of her. She stopped, in order to cross over, too. He had made a mistake, and breathed again. He had often asked how he ought to behave if he met her face to face. Should he bow, or should he appear not to have seen her? "I would not see her," he thought.

When he got home he thought: "I must change my lodgings; this is no longer good enough for me." He felt nervous and lively, capable of anything; and he said aloud, as he walked from his bed to the window: "Fortune is here at last! Fortune is here! I must write to father." From time to time he wrote to his father, and the letter always brought thought; "I am successful in everything." For skill at cup and ball really conferred a kind of superiority in the office of the *Vie Française*.

He left the office early, to have time to dress, happiness to the little Norman inn by the roadside, at the summit of the slope overlooking Rouen and the broad valley of the Seine. From time to time, too, he received a blue envelope, addressed in a large, shaky hand, and read the same unvarying lines at the beginning of the paternal epistle: "My dear son, this leaves your mother and myself in good health. There is not much news here. I must tell you, however," etc. In his heart he retained a feeling of interest for the village matters, for the news of the neighbors and the condition of the crops.

He repeated to himself, as he tied his white tie before his little looking-glass: "I must write to father to-morrow. If the old fellow could see me this evening in the house I am going to, wouldn't

he be astonished! By Jove! I am going to have such a dinner as he has never tasted.'' And he suddenly saw the dark kitchen behind the empty café, the copper stewpans casting their yellow reflections on the wall; the cat on the hearth, with her nose to the fire, in sphinx-like attitude; the wooden table, greasy with time and spilled liquids, a soup tureen smoking upon it, and a lighted candle between two plates. He saw them, too—his father and mother, two slow-moving peasants, eating their soup. He knew the smallest wrinkles on their old faces, the slightest movements of their arms and heads. He knew even what they talked about every evening as they sat at supper. He thought, too: '' I must really go and see them.'' But, his toilet being ended, he blew out his light and went downstairs.

He entered the anteroom, lighted by tall bronze candelabra, with confidence, and handed his cane and overcoat quite naturally to two valets who approached. All the drawing-rooms were illuminated. Madame Walter received her guests in the second, the largest. She welcomed him with a charming smile, and he shook hands with two gentlemen who had arrived before him—Monsieur Firmin and Monsieur Laroche-Mathieu, deputies and anonymous editors of the *Vie Française*. Monsieur Laroche-Mathieu had special authority at the office, due to his influence in the Chamber. No one doubted his being a minister some day. Then came the Forestiers, the wife in pink and looking charming. Duroy was astonished to see her on terms of intimacy with the two deputies. She chatted in low tones with Monsieur Laroche-Mathieu for more than five minutes beside the fireplace. Charles seemed worn out. He had grown much thinner during the past

month, and coughed incessantly as he repeated: "I should make up my mind to finish the winter in the south." Norbert de Varenne and Jacques Rival made their appearance together. Then, as a door opened at the farther end of the room, Monsieur Walter came in with two tall young girls, of from sixteen to eighteen, one ugly, the other pretty.

Duroy knew that the chief was the father of a family, but he was struck with astonishment. He had never thought of his daughters, save as one thinks of distant countries which one will never see. And then he had fancied them quite young; and here they were, grown-up women. They held out their hands to him after being introduced, and then went and sat down at a little table, without doubt reserved for them. Some one was still expected, and all were silent with that sense of oppression preceding dinner among people whose mental atmosphere differs at the close of their various daily occupations.

Duroy having aimlessly raised his eyes toward the walls, Monsieur Walter called to him from a distance, with an evident wish to show off his property: "Are you looking at my pictures? I will show them to you;" and he took a lamp, so that the details might be distinguished.

Stopping before the next wall, he announced in a grave tone, like a master of ceremonies: "High art." There were four: "A Hospital Visit," by Gervex; "A Harvester," by Bastien-Lepage; "A Window," by Bouguereau; and "An Execution," by Jean Paul Laurens. Then the governor showed a Detaille, "The Lesson," which represented a soldier in a barrack room teaching a poodle to play the drum, and said: "That is very witty."

Duroy laughed, and exclaimed:

"It is charming, charm——" He stopped short on hearing behind him the voice of Madame de Marelle, who had just come in.

M. Forestier continued to light up the pictures as he explained them. But Duroy saw nothing, and heard without understanding. Madame de Marelle was there behind him. What ought he to do? If he spoke to her, might she not turn her back on him, or treat him with insolence? If he did not approach her, what would people think? He said to himself: "I will gain time, at any rate." He was so upset that for a moment he thought of feigning a sudden indisposition, which would allow him to withdraw.

The examination of the walls was over. M. Forestier went to put down his lamp and welcome the last comer, while Duroy began to re-examine the pictures, as if he could not tire of admiring them. He was quite overcome. What should he do? Madame Forestier called to him: "Monsieur Duroy!" He went to her. It was to speak to him of a friend of hers who was about to give a fête, and who would like to have a line to that effect in the *Vie Française*. He gasped out: "Certainly, Madame, most certainly."

Madame de Marelle was now quite close to him. He dared not turn round to go away. All at once he thought he was going crazy; she had said aloud: "Good evening, Bel-Ami. So you no longer recognize me."

He immediately turned round. She stood before him, smiling, her eyes beaming with sprightliness and affection, and held out her hand. He took it tremblingly, still fearing some trick, some perfidy. She added calmly: "What has become of you? One no longer sees anything of you."

He stammered, without recovering his presence of mind: "I have a great deal to do, Madame, a great deal to do. Monsieur Walter has intrusted me with new duties which keep me very busy."

She replied, still looking him in the face, but without his being able to discover anything save good will in her glance: "I know it. But that is no reason why you should forget your friends."

They were separated by a stout lady with red arms and red face, who just came in, with an elaborate dress cut very low, and walking so heavily that one guessed by her motions the size and weight of her legs. As she seemed to be treated with great attention, Duroy asked Madame Forestier: "Who is that lady?"

"The Vicomtesse de Percemur, who signs her articles 'Lily Fingers.'"

He was astounded and felt inclined to laugh. "'Lily Fingers,' 'Lily Fingers.' And I, who imagined her young like yourself. So that is 'Lily Fingers.' That is very funny, very funny."

A servant appeared in the doorway and announced dinner. The dinner was commonplace and lively, one of those dinners at which people talk about everything without saying anything. Duroy found himself between the elder daughter of the master of the house, the ugly one, Mademoiselle Rose, and Madame de Marelle. The vicinity of the latter embarrassed him somewhat, although she seemed very much at her ease, and chatted with her usual vivacity. He was disturbed at first, constrained, hesitating like a musician who has lost the keynote. By degrees, however, he recovered his assurance, and their eyes continually meeting, questioned one another, exchanging looks in an intimate fashion as of old. What did they say then? Not

much, but their lips quivered every time that they looked at each other.

The young fellow, however, wishing to do the amiable to his employer's daughter, spoke to her from time to time. She replied as the mother would have done, never hesitating as to what she should say. On the right of Monsieur Walter, the Vicomtesse de Percemur gave herself the airs of a princess, and Duroy, amused at watching her, said in a low voice to Madame de Marelle: "Do you know the other, the one who signs her articles 'Pink Domino'?"

"Yes, very well; the Baroness de Livar."

"Is she of the same variety?"

"No, but quite as funny. A tall, dried-up woman of sixty, false curls, projecting teeth, ideas dating from the Restoration, and toilets of the same epoch."

"Where did they unearth these literary phenomena?"

"Waifs of the nobility are always lionized by *bourgeois parvenus*."

"No other reason?"

"None."

Then a political discussion began between the master of the house, the two deputies, Norbert de Varenne, and Jacques Rival, and lasted till dessert.

When they returned to the drawing-room, Duroy again approached Madame de Marelle, and looking her in the eyes, said: "Shall I see you home tonight?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because Monsieur Laroche-Mathieu, who is my neighbor, sees me to my door every time I dine here."

"When shall I see you?"

"Come and lunch with me to-morrow."

And they separated without saying anything more.

Duroy did not remain late, finding the evening dull. As he went downstairs he overtook Norbert de Varenne, who was also leaving. The old poet took him by the arm. No longer having to fear any rivalry in the paper, their work being essentially different, he now manifested a fatherly kindness toward the young fellow.

"Well, will you walk home a bit of my way with me?" said he.

"With pleasure," replied Duroy.

And they went out, walking slowly along the Boulevard Malesherbes. Paris was almost deserted that night—a cold night; one of those nights in which space seems vaster than on others, when the stars seem higher and the air bears on its icy breath something coming from beyond the stars. The two men did not speak at first. Then Duroy, in order to say something, remarked: "You are gloomy to-day, dear master."

The poet replied: "I am always so, my lad; so will you be in a few years. Life is a hill. As long as one is climbing up one looks toward the summit and is happy, but when one reaches the top one suddenly perceives the descent before one, and its end, which is death. One climbs up slowly, but one goes down quickly. At your age one is happy. One hopes for many things which, however, never come to pass. At my age one no longer expects anything—but death."

Duroy began to laugh: "You make chills run down my back."

Norbert de Varenne went on: "No, you do not

understand me now, but later on you will remember what I am saying to you at this moment. A day comes, and it comes early for many, when there is an end to mirth, for behind everything one looks at one sees death. You do not even understand the word. At your age it means nothing; at mine it is terrible. Yes, one understands it all at once, one does not know how or why, and then everything in life changes its aspect. To live, in short, is to die. I now see death so near that I often want to stretch out my arms to push it back. I see it everywhere. The insects crushed on the path, the falling leaves, the white hair in a friend's head, rend my heart and cry to me: 'Behold it!' It spoils for me all I do, all I see, all that I eat and drink, all that I love; the bright moonlight, the sunrise, the broad ocean, the noble rivers, and the soft summer evening air so sweet to breathe."

He stopped, reflected for a few moments, and then, with a look of resignation, said: "I am a lost creature. I have neither father nor mother, nor sister nor brother; no wife, no children, no God."

He added, after a pause: "I have only poetry."

They reached the Pont de la Concorde, crossed it in silence, and walked past the Palais Bourbon. Norbert de Varenne began to speak again, saying: "Get married, my friend; you do not know what it is to live alone at my age. Solitude now fills me with horrible agony—solitude at home by the fireside of a night. It is so profound, so sad; the silence of the room in which one dwells alone. It is not alone the silence that surrounds the body, but the silence around the soul; and when the furniture creaks, I tremble all over, for no sound is expected in my gloomy dwelling." He was silent

again for a moment, and then added: "When one is old it is good to have children."

They had got halfway down the Rue de Bourgogne. The poet stopped in front of a high house, rang the bell, shook Duroy by the hand, and said:

"Forget all this old man's doddering, young man, and live as befits your age. Good night."

And he disappeared in the dark passage.

Duroy resumed his route with a pain at his heart. It seemed to him as though he had been shown a hole filled with bones, an unavoidable gulf into which all must fall one day. He muttered: "By Jove! it can't be very lively in his place. I should not care for a front seat to see the procession of his thoughts. The deuce, no!"

But having paused to allow a perfumed lady to alight from her carriage and enter her house, he drew in with eager breath, as she passed him, the scent of verbena and orris floating in the air. His lungs and heart throbbed suddenly with hope and joy, and the recollection of Madame de Marelle, whom he was to see the next day, came vividly to mind. Everything smiled on him, life welcomed him with kindness. How sweet is the realization of one's hopes!

Madame de Marelle received him as though no rupture had taken place. Then she said: "You don't know what a vexation has happened to me, darling. My husband is home for six weeks. He has obtained leave. But I won't remain six weeks without seeing you, especially after our little tiff, and this is how I have arranged matters. You are to come and dine with us on Monday. I have already spoken to him about you, and I will introduce you."

Duroy hesitated, somewhat perplexed. He was

afraid lest something might betray him—a slight embarrassment, a look, no matter what. He stammered out: "No, I would rather not make your husband's acquaintance."

She insisted, very much astonished, standing before him with wide-open, wondering eyes. "But why? What a funny thing. I should not have thought you such a goose."

He was hurt, and said: "Very well, then, I will come to dinner on Monday."

She went on: "In order that it may seem more natural, I will ask the Forestiers, though I really do not like entertaining people at home."

Until Monday, Duroy scarcely thought any more about the interview, but on mounting the stairs at Madame de Marelle's he felt strangely uneasy, not that it was so repugnant to him to take her husband's hand, to drink his wine, and eat his bread, but because he apprehended something, without knowing what. He was shown into the drawing-room and waited as usual. Soon the door of the inner room opened, and he saw a tall, white-bearded man, wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, grave and correct, who advanced toward him with punctilious politeness, saying: "My wife has often spoken to me of you, sir, and I am delighted to make your acquaintance."

Duroy stepped forward, assuming an expression of excessive cordiality, and grasped his host's hand with exaggerated energy. Then, sitting down, he could find nothing to say.

Monsieur de Marelle placed a log upon the fire, and inquired: "Have you been long engaged in journalism?"

"Only a few months."

"Ah! You have got on quickly?"

"Yes, fairly so;" and he began to chat at random, without thinking very much about what he was saying, talking of all the trifles customary among men who do not know one another.

Madame de Marelle came in suddenly, and having taken in matters with a smiling, impenetrable glance, went toward Duroy, who dared not, in the presence of her husband, kiss her hand as he always did. She was calm and light-hearted as a woman of the world, this meeting seeming quite natural to her frank and inborn trickiness. Laurine appeared, and went and held up her forehead to George more quietly than usual, her father's presence intimidating her. Her mother said to her: "Well, you don't call him Bel-Ami to-day." And the child blushed as if a serious indiscretion had been committed, a thing revealed that ought not to have been mentioned, an intimate and, so to say, guilty secret of her heart laid bare.

When the Forestiers arrived, all were alarmed at the condition of Charles. He had grown frightfully thin and pale within a week, and coughed incessantly. He told them that he was leaving for Cannes on the following Thursday, by the doctor's imperative orders. They left early, and Duroy said, shaking his head: "I think he is very bad. He will never make old bones."

Madame de Marelle said calmly: "Oh, he is done for. There is a man who was lucky in finding the wife he did."

Duroy asked: "Does she help him much?"

"She does everything. She is acquainted with everything that is going on; she knows every one without seeming to go and see anybody; she gets what she wants as she wants it, and when she wants it. Oh, she is keen, clever, and intriguing as no

one else is. She would be a treasure for any one wanting to get on."

George said: "She will marry again very quickly, no doubt?"

Madame de Marelle replied: "Yes. I should not be surprised if she had some one in view—a deputy, unless, indeed, he objects—for—for—there may be serious—moral—obstacles. But then—I don't really know."

Monsieur de Marelle grumbled, with slow impatience: "You are always suspecting a number of things, and I do not like it. Do not let us meddle with the affairs of others. We have enough to do to guide our own conscience. That should be a rule with every one."

Duroy withdrew, uneasy at heart, and with his mind full of vague plans. The next day he paid a visit to the Forestiers, and found them finishing their packing. Charles, stretched on a sofa, exaggerated his difficulty of breathing, and repeated: "I ought to have been off a month ago."

Then he gave George a series of orders concerning the paper, although everything had been agreed upon and settled with Monsieur Walter. As George left, he energetically squeezed his old comrade's hand, saying: "Well, old man, we shall have you back soon." But as Madame Forestier was showing him out, he said to her quickly: "You have not forgotten our agreement? We are friends and allies, are we not? So if you have need of me, for no matter what, do not hesitate to call on me. Send a letter or a telegram, and I will obey."

She murmured: "Thank you, I will not forget." And her eye, too, said: "Thank you," in a deeper and tenderer fashion.

As Duroy went downstairs, he met, slowly com-

ing up, Monsieur de Vaudrec, whom he had met there once before. The comte appeared sad, and at this departure perhaps. Wishing to show his good breeding, the journalist eagerly bowed. The other returned the salutation courteously, but in a somewhat dignified manner.

The Forestiers left on Thursday evening.

CHAPTER VII

A MEANS TO AN END

CHARLES'S absence gave Duroy an increased importance in the editorial department of the *Vie Française.* He signed several editorials, besides his "Echoes," for the manager insisted on every one assuming the responsibility of his own "copy." He became engaged in several newspaper controversies, in which he acquitted himself creditably, and his constant relations with different statesmen were gradually preparing him to become in his turn a clever and discriminating political editor. There was only one cloud on his horizon. It came from a little free-lance newspaper which continually assailed him, or, rather, in him assailed the editor of "Echoes" in the *Vie Française,* the editor of "Monsieur Walter's startlers," according to the anonymous writer of the *Plume.* Day by day cutting paragraphs, insinuations of every kind, appeared in it.

One day Jacques Rival said to Duroy: "You are very patient."

Duroy replied: "What can I do? There is no direct attack."

But one afternoon, as he entered the editor's room, Boisrenard held out the current number of the *Plume,* saying: "Here's another spiteful dig at you."

"Ah! what about?"

"Oh, a mere nothing—the arrest of a Madame Aubert by the Society for the Prevention of Vice."

George took the paper, and read, under the heading, "Duroy's latest":

"The illustrious reporter of the *Vie Française* to-day informs us that Madame Aubert, whose arrest by an agent of the odious S. P. V. we announced, exists only in our imagination. Now, the person in question lives at 18 Rue de l'Ecureuil, Montmartre. As to the reporter of whom it is a question, he would do better to give us one of those good sensational bits of news of which he has the secret—news of deaths contradicted the following day, news of battles which have never taken place, announcements of important utterances by sovereigns who have not said anything—all the news, in short, which constitutes Walter's profits, or even one of those little indiscretions concerning entertainments given by would-be fashionable ladies, or the excellence of certain articles of consumption which are a means of income to some of our colleagues of the press."

The young fellow was more astonished than annoyed, only understanding that there was something very disagreeable for him in all this.

Boisrenard went on: "Who gave you that piece of gossip?"

Duroy thought for a moment, having forgotten. Then all at once the recollection occurred to him,

" Saint-Potin." He reread the paragraph in the *Plume* and reddened, roused by the accusation of graft. He exclaimed: " What! Do they mean to assert that I am paid——"

Boisrenard interrupted him: " Why, yes. It is very annoying for you. The governor is very strict about that sort of thing. It might so often occur in the ' Echoes.' "

Saint-Potin came in at that moment. Duroy went to meet him. " Have you seen the paragraph in the *Plume?* "

" Yes, and I have just come from Madame Aubert. She does exist, but she was not arrested. That much of the report has no foundation."

Duroy hastened to the room of the manager, whom he found somewhat cool and with a look of suspicion in his eye. After having listened to the statement of the case, Monsieur Walter said: " Go and see the woman yourself, and contradict the paragraph in such terms as will put a stop to such things being written about you any more. I mean the latter part of the paragraph. It is very annoying for the paper, for yourself, and for me. A journalist should no more be suspected than Cæsar's wife."

Duroy got into a cab, with Saint-Potin as his guide, and called out to the driver: " Number 18 Rue de l'Ecureuil, Montmartre."

It was a huge house, and he had to scale six flights of stairs. An old woman in a woolen jacket opened the door to them. " What is it you want with me now? " said she, on catching sight of Saint-Potin.

He replied: " I have brought this gentleman, who is an inspector of police, and who would like to hear your story."

Then she let them in, saying: "Two more have been here since you, from some paper or other, I don't know which." Then, turning toward Duroy, she added: "So this gentleman wants to know about it?"

"Yes. Were you arrested by the society?"

She raised her arms in the air. "Never in my life, sir, never in my life. This is what it was all about. I have a butcher who sells good meat, but who gives bad weight. I have often noticed it without saying anything; but the other day, when I asked him for two pounds of chops, as I had my daughter and my son-in-law to dinner, I caught him weighing in bits of trimmings—trimmings of chops, it is true, but not of mine. I could have made a stew of them, it is true, but when I ask for chops it is not to get other people's trimmings. I refused to take them, and he calls me an old shark. I call him an old rogue, and from one thing to another, we raised such a row that there were over a hundred people round the shop, some of them laughing to kill themselves. So that at last a police officer came up and asked us to settle it at the police station. We went, and the captain dismissed the case. Since then I get my meat elsewhere, and don't even pass his door, in order to avoid any disturbance."

She ceased talking, and Duroy asked: "Is that all?"

"It is the whole truth, sir," and having offered him a glass of liqueur, which he declined, the old woman insisted on the short weight of the butcher being spoken of in the report.

On his return to the office, Duroy wrote his reply:

"An anonymous scribbler in the *Plume* seeks to

pick a quarrel with me on the subject of an old woman whom he states was arrested by an *agent des moeurs,* which fact I deny. I have myself seen Madame Aubert—who is at least sixty years of age —and she told me in detail her quarrel with the butcher over the weighing of some chops, which led to an explanation before the commissary of police. This is the whole truth. As to the other insinuations of the writer in the *Plume,* I despise them. Besides, a man does not reply to such things when they are written under a mask.

"GEORGE DUROY."

Monsieur Walter and Jacques Rival, who had come in, thought this note satisfactory, and it was settled that it should go in at once.

Duroy went home early, somewhat agitated and slightly uneasy. What reply would the other man make? Who was he? Why this brutal attack? With the rough manners of journalists, this affair might go very far. He slept badly. When he read his reply in the paper next morning, it seemed to him more aggressive in print than in manuscript. He might, it seemed to him, have softened certain phrases. He felt feverish all day, and slept badly again at night. He rose at dawn to get the number of the *Plume* that must contain a reply to him.

The weather had turned cold again; it was freezing hard. The gutters, frozen while still flowing, showed like two ribbons of ice alongside the pavement. The morning papers had not yet come in, and Duroy recalled the day of his first article, "Souvenirs d'un Chasseur d'Afrique." At length the newspapers were passed in at the window of the kiosk, and the woman vendor held out to Duroy an unfolded copy of the *Plume.*

He glanced through it in search of his name, and

at first saw nothing. He was breathing again, when he saw between two dashes:

"Monsieur Duroy, of the *Vie Française,* contradicts us, and, in contradicting us, lies. He admits, however, that there is a Madame Aubert, and that an agent took her before the commissary of police. It only remains, therefore, to add two words, '*des mœurs,*' after the word '*agent,*' and he is right. But the conscience of certain journalists is on a level with their talent. And I sign,

"LOUIS LANGREMONT."

George's heart began to beat violently, and he went home to dress without being too well aware of what he was doing.

He dressed quickly, and went to see Monsieur Walter, although it was barely eight o'clock. Monsieur Walter, already up, was reading the *Plume.* "Well," said he, with a grave face, on seeing Duroy, "you cannot draw back now." The young fellow did not answer, and the other went on: "Go at once and see Rival, who will act for you."

Duroy stammered a few vague words, and went out in quest of the descriptive writer, who was still asleep. He jumped out of bed, and having read the paragraph, said: "By Jove! you will have to fight! Whom do you think of for the other second?"

"I really don't know."

"Boisrenard? What do you think of him?"

"Yes. Boisrenard."

"Are you a good swordsman!"

"Not at all."

"The devil! And with the pistol?"

"I can shoot a little."

"Good. You shall practice while I look after everything else. Wait for me a moment."

He went into his dressing-room and soon reappeared, washed, shaved, correct-looking.

"Come with me," said he.

He lived on the ground floor of a small house, and he led Duroy to the cellar, an enormous cellar, converted into a fencing room and shooting gallery, all the openings to the street being closed. After having lit a row of gas jets running the whole length of the second cellar, at the end of which was an iron man painted red and blue, he placed on a table two pairs of breech-loading pistols and began to give the word of command in a sharp tone as though on the ground: "Ready! Fire—one—two—three."

Duroy, dumfounded, obeyed, raising his arm, aiming and firing, and as he often hit the mark fair on the body, having frequently made use of an old horse pistol of his father's when a boy against the birds, Jacques Rival, well satisfied, exclaimed: "Good—very good—very good—you will do—you will do."

Then he left George, saying: "Go on shooting till noon. Here is plenty of ammunition; don't be afraid to use it. I will come back to take you to lunch and tell you how things are going."

Left to himself, Duroy fired a few more shots, and then sat down and began to reflect. How absurd these things were, all the same! What did a duel prove? Was a rascal less of a rascal after going out? What did an honest man who had been insulted gain by risking his life against a scoundrel? And his mind, gloomily inclined, recalled the words of Norbert de Varenne.

Then he felt thirsty, and, having heard the sound of water dropping behind him, found that there was a hydrant with a hose attached, and he drank from

the nozzle of the hose. Then he began to think again. It was gloomy in this cellar, as gloomy as a tomb. The dull and distant rumbling of vehicles sounded like the rumblings of a far-off storm. What o'clock could it be? The hours passed by there as they must pass in prisons, without anything to indicate or mark them save the visits of the warden. He waited a long time. Then all at once he heard footsteps and voices, and Jacques Rival reappeared accompanied by Boisrenard. He called out as soon as he saw Duroy: "It's all settled."

The latter thinking the matter was settled by a letter of apology, his heart beat and he stammered, "Ah! thanks!"

The descriptive writer continued: "That fellow Langremont is very square; he accepted all our conditions. Twenty-five paces, one shot, raising the pistol at the word of command. The hand is much steadier that way than in bringing it down. See here, Boisrenard, this is what I mean."

And taking a pistol he fired, pointing out how much better one could aim by raising the arm. Then he said: "Now, let's go and lunch; it is past twelve o'clock."

They went to a neighboring restaurant. Duroy scarcely spoke. He ate in order not to appear afraid, and then, in course of the afternoon, accompanied Boisrenard to the office, where he got through his work mechanically and in a distracted fashion. They considered him game. Jacques Rival dropped in in the course of the afternoon, and it was settled that his seconds should call for him in a landau at seven o'clock the next morning, and drive to the Bois du Vesinet, where the duel was to take place. All this had been done so unexpectedly, without

his taking part in it, without his saying a word, without his giving his opinion, without his accepting or refusing, and with such rapidity, too, that he was bewildered, scared, and scarcely able to understand what was going on.

He found himself at home at nine o'clock, after having dined with Boisrenard, who out of self-devotion had not left him all day. As soon as he was alone, he sat down and began to reflect. He had thrown upon his little table one of his adversary's cards, given him by Rival in order to retain his address. He read, as he had already done a score of times during the day, "Louis Langremont, 176 Rue Montmartre." Nothing more. He examined these assembled letters, which seemed to him mysterious and full of some disturbing import! Louis Langremont. Who was this man? What was his age, his height, his appearance? Was it not disgusting that a stranger, an unknown, should thus come and suddenly disturb one's existence without cause and from sheer caprice, on account of an old woman who had had a quarrel with her butcher? What a brute!

And he stood lost in thought, his eyes fixed on the card. Anger was aroused in him against this bit of paper, an anger with which was blended a strange sense of uneasiness. What a stupid business it was! He took a pair of nail scissors which were lying about, and stuck their points into the printed name as though he were stabbing some one.

The sound of his own voice made him shudder, and he glanced about him. He began to feel very nervous. He drank a glass of water and went to bed.

As soon as he was in bed he blew out his candle and closed his eyes. He was warm between the

sheets, though it was very cold in his room, but he could not manage to doze off.

A strange desire to get up and look at himself in the glass suddenly seized him. He relit his candle. When he saw his face so reflected, he scarcely recognized himself, and it seemed to him that he had never seen himself before. His eyes appeared enormous, and he was pale, yes, he was certainly pale, very pale. Suddenly the thought shot through his mind, "By this time to-morrow I may be dead." And his heart began to beat again furiously.

The thought occurred to him to make a fire. He built it up slowly without looking round. His hands shook slightly with a kind of nervous tremor when he touched anything. His head wandered, his disjointed, drifting thoughts became fleeting and painful, an intoxication invaded his mind as though he had been drinking. And he kept asking himself: "What shall I do? What will become of me?"

He began to walk up and down, repeating mechanically: "I must pull myself together, I must pull myself together." Then he added: "I will write to my parents in case of accident." He sat down again, did not dare write, and sprang up with a jump. From time to time his teeth absolutely chattered, and he asked himself: "Has my opponent been out before? Is he a frequenter of the shooting galleries? Is he known and classed as a shot?" He had never heard his name mentioned. And yet if this man had not been a remarkably good pistol shot, he would scarcely have accepted that dangerous weapon without discussion or hesitation.

Day was breaking, and he set about his toilet. He had another moment of weakness while shaving, in thinking that it was, perhaps, the last time he should shave his face. But he swallowed a mouth-

ful of brandy, and finished dressing. The hour which followed was difficult to get through. He paced up and down, trying to keep from thinking. When he heard a knock at the door he almost fell over backward, so startled was he. It was his seconds. Already!

They were wrapped up in furs, and Rival, after shaking his principal's hand, said: "It is as cold as Siberia." Then he added: "Well, how goes it?"

"Very well."

"You are quite steady?"

"Quite."

"That's all right. Have you had something to eat and drink?"

"Yes; I don't need anything."

Boisrenard, in honor of the occasion, sported the ribbon of a foreign order, yellow and green, that Duroy had never seen him display before.

They went downstairs. A gentleman was awaiting them in the carriage. Rival introduced him as "Dr. Le Brument." Duroy shook hands, saying: "I am very much obliged to you;" and sought to take his place on the front seat. He sat down on something hard that made him jump up again, as though impelled by a spring. It was the pistol-case.

Rival observed: "No, the back seat for the doctor and the principal, the back seat."

Duroy ended by understanding him, and sank down beside the doctor. The two seconds got in in their turn, and the driver started. He knew where to go. But the pistol case was in the way of every one, above all of Duroy, who would have preferred it out of sight. They tried to put it behind them, but it hurt their backs; they stuck it upright between Rival and Boisrenard, and it kept falling all

the time. They finished by stowing it away under their feet. Conversation languished, although the doctor related some anecdotes. Rival alone replied to him. Duroy would have liked to say something witty, but he was afraid of losing the thread of his ideas, of showing the troubled state of his mind, and was haunted, too, by the fear that he might begin to tremble.

The carriage was soon right out in the country. It was about nine o'clock. It was one of those sharp winter mornings when everything is bright and brittle as glass. The trees, coated with hoar frost, seemed to have been sweating ice; the earth rang beneath one's steps, the dry air carried the slightest sound to a distance, the blue sky seemed to shine like a mirror, and the sun, dazzling and cold itself, shed upon the frozen universe rays which did not warm anything.

Rival observed to Duroy: "I got the pistols at Gastine Renet's. He loaded them himself. The box is sealed. We shall toss up, besides, to see whether we use them or those of our adversary."

Duroy mechanically replied: "I am very much obliged to you."

Then Rival gave him some special directions, for he was anxious that his principal should not make any mistake. He emphasized each point several times, saying: "When they say, 'Are you ready, gentlemen?' you must answer, 'Yes,' in a loud tone. When they give the word 'Fire!' you must raise your arm quickly, and you must fire before they say 'three.'"

And Duroy kept repeating to himself—"When they give the word to fire, I must raise my arm. When they give the word to fire, I must raise my arm." He learned it as children learn their lessons,

by murmuring them to satiety in order to fix them on their minds. "When they give the word to fire, I must raise my arm."

The carriage entered a wood, turned down an avenue on the right, and then to the right again. Rival suddenly opened the door to cry to the driver: "That way, down that narrow road."

Duroy caught sight, at the farther side of the clearing, of another carriage drawn up, and four gentlemen stamping to keep their feet warm, and he was obliged to open his mouth, so difficult did his breathing become.

The seconds got out first, and then the doctor and the principal. Rival had taken the pistol case and had walked away with Boisrenard to meet two of the strangers who came toward them. Duroy watched them salute one another ceremoniously, and then walk up and down the clearing, looking now on the ground and now at the trees, as though they were looking for something that had fallen down or might fly away. Then they measured off a certain number of paces, and with great difficulty stuck two walking sticks into the frozen ground. Then they reassembled in a group and went through the action of tossing, like children playing heads or tails.

Doctor Le Brument said to Duroy: "Do you feel all right? Do you want anything?"

"No, nothing, thanks."

It seemed to him that he was mad, that he was asleep, that he was dreaming, that a supernatural influence enveloped him. Was he afraid? Perhaps. But he did not know. Everything about him had altered.

Jacques Rival returned and announced in low tones of satisfaction: "It is all ready. Luck has favored us as regards the pistols."

That, so far as Duroy was concerned, was a matter of profound indifference.

They took off his overcoat, which he let them do mechanically. They felt the breast pocket of his frock coat to make certain that he had no pocket-book or papers likely to deaden a ball. He kept repeating to himself like a prayer: "When the word is given to fire, I must raise my arm."

They led him up to one of the sticks stuck in the ground, and handed him his pistol. Then he saw a man standing just in front of him—a short, stout, bald-headed man, wearing spectacles. It was his adversary. He saw him very plainly, but he could not think. "When the word to fire is given, I must raise my arm and fire at once."

A voice rang out in the deep silence, a voice that seemed to come from a great distance, saying: "Are you ready, gentlemen?"

George exclaimed: "Yes."

The same voice gave the word: "Fire!"

He heard nothing more, he saw nothing more, he took note of nothing more, he only knew that he raised his arm, pressing strongly on the trigger. And he heard nothing. But he saw all at once a little smoke at the end of his pistol barrel, and as the man in front of him still stood in the same position, he perceived, too, a little cloud of smoke drifting off over his head.

They had both fired. It was over.

His seconds and the doctor touched him, felt him, and unbuttoned his clothes, asking anxiously: "Are you hit?"

He replied at haphazard: "No, I do not think so."

Langremont, too, was as unhurt as his enemy, and Jacques Rival murmured in a discontented tone:

"It is always so with those damned pistols. You either miss or kill. What a filthy weapon!"

Duroy did not move, paralyzed by surprise and joy. It was over. They had to take away his pistol, which he still held clinched in his hand. It seemed to him now that he could have done battle with the whole world. It was over. What happiness! He felt suddenly brave enough to defy no matter whom.

All the seconds conversed together for a few moments, making an appointment to draw up their report of the proceedings in the course of the day. Then they got into the carriage again, and the driver, who was laughing on the box, started off, cracking his whip. They breakfasted together on the boulevards, and in chatting over the event, Duroy narrated his impressions.

"I felt quite unconcerned, quite. You must, however, have noticed it yourselves."

Rival replied: "Yes, you bore yourself very well."

When the report was drawn up it was handed to Duroy, who was to insert it in the paper. He was astonished to read that he had exchanged a couple of shots with Monsieur Louis Langremont, and rather uneasily interrogated Rival, saying: "But we only fired once."

The other smiled. "Yes, one shot apiece, that makes a couple of shots."

Duroy, deeming the explanation satisfactory, did not persist. Daddy Walter embraced him, saying: "Bravo, bravo! You have defended the colors of the *Vie Française*. Bravo!"

George showed himself in the course of the evening at the principal newspaper offices, and at the chief cafés on the boulevards. He twice encountered his adversary, who was also showing himself. They

did not bow to each other. If one of them had been wounded they would have shaken hands. Each of them, moreover, swore with conviction that he had heard the whistling of the other's bullet.

The next day, about eleven, Duroy received a telegram.

"Awfully worried. Come at once. Rue de Constantinople. CLO."

When he met her, he gave a dramatic account of the duel, which aroused her sympathy, and she murmured:

"Oh, my poor darling, my poor darling!"

Suddenly an idea came to him, and he asked: "What is the rent here?"

"A hundred francs a month."

"Well, I will take the rooms on my own account. Mine are no longer good enough for my new position."

After a few moments' reflection, she said:

"No, I do not wish it."

"Why not?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Because."

It was agreed on, however, that he should take the rooms, and, as they parted, she said:

"Come and dine with us on Sunday. My husband thinks you are charming."

"What a strange being! What a feather-brain! How came that old man to marry that madcap!" thought Duroy, as he made his way to the office.

CHAPTER VIII

DUROY PROPOSES

HIS duel had given Duroy a position among the leader writers of the *Vie Française;* but as he had great difficulty in finding ideas, he made a specialty of diatribes on the decadence of morality, the lowering of the standard of character, the weakening of the patriotic fibre and the anæmia of French honor. He had discovered the word anæmia, and was very proud of it. And when Madame de Marelle, filled with that skeptical, mocking, and incredulous spirit characteristic of the Parisian, laughed at his tirades, which she demolished with an epigram, he replied with a smile:

"Bah! this sort of thing will give me a good reputation later on."

He now resided in the Rue de Constantinople, whither he had moved his portmanteau, his hair-

brush, his razor, and his soap, which was all his moving amounted to.

February was drawing to a close. There was an odor of violets in the street, as one passed the barrows of the flower sellers of a morning. Duroy was living beneath a sky without a cloud.

One night, on returning home, he found a letter that had been slipped under the door. He glanced at the postmark and read "Cannes." Having opened it, he read:

"VILLA JOLIE, CANNES.

"DEAR SIR AND FRIEND: You told me, did you not, that I could reckon upon you for anything? Well, I have a very painful service to ask of you; it is to come and help me, so that I may not be left alone during the last moments of Charles, who is dying. He may not last the week out, as the doctor forewarned me, although he has not taken to his bed. I have no longer strength nor courage to witness this hourly death, and I think with terror of those last moments which are drawing near. You are the only one of whom I can ask such a service, as my husband has no relatives. You were his comrade; he opened the door of the paper to you. Come, I beg of you; I have no one else to ask. Believe me, your very sincere friend, MADELEINE FORESTIER."

A strange feeling filled George's heart, a sense of freedom and of space opening before him, and he murmured: "To be sure I'll go. Poor Charles! What are we, after all?"

Monsieur Walter, to whom he read the letter, grumblingly granted permission, repeating: "But be back soon; you are indispensable to us."

George left for Cannes next day by the seven o'clock express, after letting the Marelles know of his departure by telegram. He arrived the following evening about four o'clock. A commissionaire guided him to the Villa Jolie, built halfway up the

slope of the pine forest clothed with white houses, which extends from Cannes to the Golfe Juan. The house—small, low, and in the Italian style—was built beside the road which winds zigzag fashion up through the trees, revealing a succession of charming views at every turn.

The manservant opened the door, and exclaimed: "Oh! sir, Madame is expecting you most impatiently."

"How is your master?" inquired Duroy.

"Not at all well, sir. He cannot last much longer."

The drawing-room, into which George was shown. was hung with pink and blue chintz. The tall and wide windows overlooked the town and the sea. Duroy muttered: "By Jove! this is swell for a country house. Where the deuce do they get the money from?"

The rustle of a dress made him turn round. Madame Forestier held out both hands to him. "How good of you to come! How good of you to come!" said she.

She was somewhat paler and thinner, but still fresh-complexioned, and, perhaps, still prettier for her additional delicacy. She murmured: "He is dreadful, do you know; he knows that he is doomed, and he leads me a fearful life. But where is your portmanteau?"

"I have left it at the station, not knowing what hotel you would like me to stop at in order to be near you."

She hesitated a moment, and then said: "You must stay here. Besides, your room is all ready. He might die at any moment, and if it were to happen during the night, I should be alone. I will send for your baggage."

He bowed, saying: "As you please."

"Now, let us go upstairs," she said.

He followed her. She opened a door on the first floor, and Duroy saw, wrapped in rugs and seated in an armchair near the window, a kind of living corpse, livid even under the red light of the setting sun, and looking toward him. He scarcely recognized, but rather guessed, that it was his friend. The room reeked of fever, medicated drinks, ether, tar, the nameless and oppressive odor of a consumptive's sick room. Forestier held out his hand slowly and with difficulty. "So here you are. You have come to see me die, then! Thank you."

Duroy affected to laugh. "To see you die? That would not be a very amusing sight, and I should not select such an occasion to visit Cannes. I came to look in upon you, and to rest myself a bit."

Forestier murmured: "Sit down," and then bent his head as though lost in painful thoughts. He breathed hurriedly and pantingly, and from time to time gave a kind of groan, as if he wanted to remind the others how ill he was.

Seeing that he would not speak, his wife came and leaned against the window sill, and indicating the view with a motion of her head, said: "Look! Is not that beautiful?"

The void beyond the dark hilltops was red, a glowing red that the eye would not bear, and Duroy, despite himself, felt the majesty of the close of the day. He murmured, finding no other term strong enough to express his admiration: "It is stunning."

Forestier raised his head, and, turning to his wife, said: "Let me have some fresh air."

She opened the window quite wide. The air that

entered surprised all three like a caress. It was a soft, warm breeze, a breeze of spring, already laden with the breath of the fragrant shrubs and flowers which grow on these coasts. A powerful odor of turpentine and the pungent smell of the eucalyptus could be distinguished.

Forestier drank it in with short and fevered gasps. He clutched the arms of the chair with his nails, and said in low, hissing, and savage tones: "Shut the window. It hurts me. I would rather die in a cellar."

His wife slowly closed the window, and then looked out into space, her forehead against the paine. Duroy, feeling very ill at ease, would have liked to have chatted with the invalid and reassured him. But he could think of nothing to comfort him. At length he said:

"Then you have not improved since you have been here?"

Forestier shrugged his shoulders with low-spirited impatience. "You see very well I have not," he replied, and again lowered his head.

Duroy went on: "By heavens! it is ever so much nicer here than in Paris. We are still in the middle of winter there. It snows, it freezes, it rains, and it is dark enough for the lamps to be lit at three in the afternoon."

"Anything new at the office?" asked Forestier.

"Nothing. They have taken on young Lacrin, who left the *Voltaire*, to do your work, but he is not up to it. It is time that you came back."

The invalid muttered: "I—I shall do all my work six feet under the sod now."

This fixed idea recurred like a knell *àpropos* of everything, continually cropped up in every idea, every sentence.

Forestier began to speak in a broken, breathless voice, heartrending to listen to. "How many more sunsets shall I see? Eight, ten, fifteen, or twenty, perhaps thirty—no more. You have time before you; for me it is all over. And it will go on all the same, after I am gone, as if I was still here." He was silent for a few moments, and then continued: "All that I see reminds me that in a few days I shall see it no more. It is horrible." Duroy suddenly recalled what Norbert de Varenne had said to him some weeks before: "I now see death so near that I often want to stretch out my arms to push it back. I see it everywhere. The insects crushed on the path, the falling leaves, the white hair in a friend's beard, rend my heart and cry to me, 'Behold it!'"

He had not understood all this at the time; but did so now, on seeing Forestier. An unknown anguish seized him as if he himself were sensible of the presence of death, hideous death, hard by, within reach of his hand, on the chair in which his friend lay gasping.

He longed to get up, to go away, to fly, to return to Paris at once. Oh! if he had known he would not have come.

Darkness had now spread over the room, like premature mourning for this dying man. The window alone remained still visible, showing, within the lighter square formed by it, the motionless outline of the young wife.

Forestier remarked, with irritation: "Well, are they going to bring in the lamp to-night? This is what they call looking after an invalid."

The shadow against the window panes disappeared, and the sound of an electric bell rang through the house. A servant shortly entered, and

placed a lamp on the mantelpiece. Madame Forestier said to her husband: "Will you go to bed, or would you rather come down to dinner?"

He murmured: "I will come down."

Waiting for this meal kept them all three sitting still for nearly an hour, only uttering from time to time some useless, commonplace remark, as if there were some danger, some mysterious danger, in letting silence endure too long, in letting the air congeal in this room where death was prowling.

At length dinner was announced. The meal seemed interminable to Duroy. They did not speak, but ate noiselessly, and then crumbled their bread with their fingers.

As soon as dinner was over, Duroy, on the plea of fatigue, retired to his room, and strove to find some reason to justify a swift departure, inventing plans, telegrams he was to receive, a recall from Monsieur Walter.

But his resolves to fly appeared more difficult to realize on awakening the next morning.

It was a bright day, one of those bright Southern days that make the heart feel light, and Duroy walked down to the sea, thinking that it would be soon enough to see Forestier some time in course of the afternoon. When he returned to lunch, the servants remarked: "Master has already asked for you two or three times, sir. Will you please step up to his room, sir?"

He went upstairs. Forestier appeared to be dozing in his armchair. His wife was reading, stretched out on the sofa.

The invalid raised his head, and Duroy said: "Well, how do you feel? You seem quite fresh this morning."

"Yes, I am better. I have recovered some of

my strength. Get through your lunch with Madeleine as soon as you can, for we are going for a drive."

As soon as she was alone with Duroy, the young wife said to him: "There, to-day he thinks he is all right again. He has been making plans all the morning. We are going to the Golfe Juan now to buy some pottery for our rooms in Paris. He is determined to go out, but I am horribly afraid of some mishap. He cannot bear the shaking of the drive."

When the landau arrived, Forestier came downstairs a step at a time, supported by his servant. But as soon as he caught sight of the carriage, he ordered the hood to be put down. His wife opposed this, saying: "You will catch cold. It is madness."

He persisted, repeating: "Oh, I am much better. I feel it."

They passed at first along some of those shady roads, bordered by gardens, which make Cannes resemble a kind of English park, and then reached the highway to Antibes, running along the seashore.

The carriage stopped opposite a kind of large pavilion, on the front of which was the inscription, "Art Pottery of the Golfe Juan." Forestier wanted to buy a couple of vases for his study. As he felt unequal to getting out of the carriage, specimens were brought out to him one after the other. He was a long time in making a choice, and consulted his wife and Duroy.

"You know," he said, "it is for the cabinet at the end of my study. Sitting in my chair, I have it before my eyes all the time. I want an antique form, a Greek outline." He examined the specimens, had others brought, and then turned again to the first ones. At length he made up his mind,

and, having paid, insisted upon the articles being sent on at once. "I shall be going back to Paris in a few days," he said.

They drove home, but as they skirted the bay a rush of cold air, from one of the valleys, suddenly met them, and the invalid began to cough. It was nothing at first, but it grew worse and became an unbroken fit of coughing, and then a kind of gasping hiccough.

Forestier was choking, and every time he tried to draw breath the cough seemed to tear his chest. Nothing would soothe or check it. He had to be borne from the carriage to his room, and Duroy, who supported his legs, felt the jerking of his feet at each spasm of his lungs. The warmth of the bed did not check the attack, which lasted till midnight, when, at length, it was lulled with narcotics. The sick man remained till morning sitting up in bed, with his eyes open.

The first words he uttered were to ask for the barber, for he insisted on being shaved every morning. He got up for this operation, but had to be helped back into bed at once, and his breathing grew so short, so hard, and so difficult, that Madame Forestier, in alarm, had Duroy, who had just turned in, roused up again in order to beg him to go for the doctor.

He came back almost immediately with Dr. Gavaut, who prescribed a soothing drink and gave some advice; but when the journalist saw him to the door, in order to ask his real opinion, he said: "It is the end. He will be dead to-morrow morning. Break it to his poor young wife, and send for a priest. I, for my part, can do nothing more. I am, however, entirely at your service."

Duroy sent for Madame Forestier. "He is dy-

ing," said he. "The doctor advises a priest being sent for. What would you like done?"

She hesitated for some time, and then, in low tones, as though she had thought of everything, replied: "Yes, that will be best—in many respects. I will break it to him—tell him the vicar wants to see him, or something or other; I really don't know what. You would be very kind if you would go and find a priest for me and pick one out, one who won't raise too many difficulties over confession."

The young fellow returned with a complaisant old ecclesiastic, who accommodated himself to the state of affairs. As soon as he had gone into the dying man's room, Madame Forestier came out of it, and sat down with Duroy in the one adjoining.

"It has quite upset him," said she. "When I spoke to him about a priest his face assumed a frightful expression as if he had felt the breath—the breath of—you know. He understood that it was all over at last, and that his hours were numbered." She was very pale as she continued: "I shall never forget the expression of his face. He certainly saw death face to face at that moment. He saw him."

They could hear the priest, who spoke in somewhat loud tones, being slightly deaf, and who was saying: "No, no; you are not so bad as all that. You are ill, but in no danger. And the proof is that I have called in as a friend, as a neighbor."

They could not make out Forestier's reply, but the old man went on: "No, I will not administer the sacrament. We will talk of that when you are better. If you wish to profit by my visit—to confess, for instance—I ask nothing better. I am a shepherd, you know, and seize every occasion to bring my lambs back to the fold."

A long silence followed. Forestier must have said something in a feeble tone. Then all at once the priest uttered in a different tone, the tone of one officiating at the altar: "The mercy of God is infinite. Repeat the *Confiteor,* my son. You have perhaps forgotten it; I will help you. Repeat after me: '*Confiteor Deo omnipotenti—Beatae Mariae semper virgini.*'"

He paused from time to time to allow the dying man to follow him. Then he said: "And now confess."

The young wife and Duroy sat still, filled with a strange emotion, stirred by anxious expectation. The invalid had murmured something. The priest repeated: "You have given way to guilty pleasures—of what kind, my son?"

Madeleine rose and said: "Let us go into the garden. We must not listen to his secrets."

And they went out and sat on a bench before the door, beneath a rose tree in bloom, and beside a bed of pinks, which shed their sweet, strong fragrance abroad in the pure air. Duroy, after a few moments' silence, inquired: "Will you delay your return to Paris?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "As soon as it is all over I shall go back there."

The servant came to inform them that "M. le Curé had finished," and they went upstairs together.

Forestier seemed to have grown thinner since the previous day. The priest held out his hand to him, saying: "Good day, my son; I will call in again to-morrow morning," and took his departure.

As soon as he had left the room the dying man, who was panting for breath, strove to hold out his two hands to his wife, and gasped: "Save me—save me, darling. I don't want to die—I don't want

to die. Oh! save me—tell me what I had better do; send for the doctor. I will take whatever you like. I won't die—I won't die."

He wept. Big tears streamed from his eyes down his fleshless cheeks, and the corners of his mouth contracted like those of a vexed child.

His wife, who began to cry, too, said: "No, no, it is nothing. It is only a passing attack; you will be better to-morrow; you tired yourself too much going out yesterday."

He kept repeating: "I don't want to die. Oh! God—God—God; what is to become of me? I shall no longer see anything—anything any more! The cemetery—I—— Oh! God!"

He said no more, but lay motionless, haggard, and gasping.

Time sped on; noon struck by the clock of a neighboring convent. Duroy left the room to eat a mouthful or two. He came back an hour later. Madame Forestier refused to take anything. The invalid had not stirred. He still continued to draw his thin fingers along the sheet as though to pull it up over his face.

His wife was seated in an armchair at the foot of the bed. Duroy took another beside her, and they waited in silence. A nurse had come, sent by the doctor, and was dozing near the window.

Duroy himself was beginning to doze off when he felt that something was taking place. He opened his eyes just in time to see Forestier close his, like two lights suddenly extinguished. A faint rattle stirred in the throat of the dying man, and two streaks of blood appeared at the corners of his mouth, and then flowed down into his shirt. His hands ceased their hideous motion. He had ceased to breathe.

His wife understood this, and, uttering a kind of shriek she fell on her knees, sobbing, with her face buried in the bedclothes. George, surprised and terrified, mechanically made the sign of the cross. The nurse, having awoke, drew near the bed. "It is all over," said she.

Duroy, who was recovering his self-possession, murmured, with a sigh of relief: "It was over sooner than I expected."

When the first shock was over and the first tears shed, they had to busy themselves with the necessary care for the dead. Duroy was running errands till nightfall. He was very hungry when he got back. Madame Forestier ate a little, and then they both sat down in the chamber of death to watch beside the body. Two candles burned on the night table beside a plate filled with holy water, in which lay a sprig of mimosa, for they had not been able to get the required twig of consecrated box.

They were alone, the young man and the young wife, beside him who was no more. They sat, without speaking, thinking and watching.

An enormous, confused, and crushing sense of terror weighed down the soul of Duroy, the terror of that boundless and inevitable annihilation that destroys our wretched, fleeting lives. He already bowed his head before its menace. He thought of the flies who live a few hours, the beasts who live a few days, the men who live a few years, the worlds which live a few centuries. What was the difference between one and the other? A few more dawns, that was all.

He turned away his eyes that he might no longer see the corpse. Madame Forestier, with bent head, seemed also absorbed in painful thoughts. Her fair hair was so pretty around her pale face that a feel-

ing, sweet as the touch of hope, flitted through the young fellow's breast. Why grieve, when he had still so many years before him? And he began to observe her. Lost in thought she did not notice him. He said to himself:

What luck the dead man had to meet such an intelligent and charming companion! How had they become acquainted? However had she agreed on her part to marry that poor, commonplace young fellow? How had she succeeded in making something of him? He remembered what had been whispered about the Comte de Vaudrec, who had dowered and married her off, it was said.

What would she do now? Whom would she marry? A deputy, as Madame de Marelle fancied, or some young fellow with a future before him, a higher class Forestier? Had she any projects, any plans, any settled ideas? How he would have liked to know that. But why this anxiety as to what she would do? He asked himself this, and perceived that his uneasiness was due to one of those half-formed and secret ideas which one hides even from one's self, and only discovers when fathoming one's self to the very bottom.

Yes, why should he not attempt this conquest himself? How strong and redoubtable he would be with her beside him!

An impatient desire to know this, to question her, to learn her intentions, took possession of him. He would have to leave on the next day but one, as he could not remain alone with her in the house. So it was necessary to be quick; it was necessary before returning to Paris to become acquainted, cleverly and delicately, with her projects, and not to allow her to retract, to yield, perhaps, to the solicitations of another, and pledge herself irrevocably.

He did not know how to give her to understand that he would be happy, very happy, to have her for his wife in his turn. Certainly he could not tell her so at that hour, in that place, before that corpse.

"Cannot we open the window a little?" said Duroy. "It seems to me that the air is tainted."

"Yes," she replied, "I have just noticed it, too."

He went to the window and opened it, and, turning round, said: "Come and get a little fresh air. It is delightful."

She came quietly, and leaned on the window sill beside him. Then he murmured in a low tone: "Listen to me, and try to understand what I want to tell you. Above all, do not be indignant at my speaking to you of such a matter at such a moment, for I shall leave you the day after to-morrow, and when you return to Paris it may be too late. I am only a poor devil without fortune, and with a position yet to make, as you know. But I have a firm will, some brains I believe, and I am well on the right track. In short, I told you one day at your house that my brightest dream would have been to have married a woman like you. I repeat this wish to you now. Do not answer, let me continue. It is not a proposal I am making to you. The time and the place would render that odious. I wish only not to leave you ignorant that you can make me happy with a word, that you can make of me either a friend and brother or a husband at your will; that my heart and myself are yours. I do not want you to answer me now. I do not want us to speak any more about the matter here. When we meet again in Paris you will let me know what you have resolved upon. Until then, not a word. Is it not so?"

He had uttered all this without looking at her, as though scattering his words abroad in the night before him. She seemed not to have heard them, so motionless had she remained, looking also straight before her with a fixed and vague stare at the vast landscape lit up by the moon. They remained for some time side by side, elbow touching elbow, silent and reflecting. Then she murmured: "It is rather cold," and turning round, returned to her chair.

Toward midnight Duroy dozed off first. When he woke up he saw that Madame Forestier was also slumbering, and, having shifted to a more comfortable position, he reclosed his eyes, growling: "Confound it all, it is more comfortable between sheets, all the same."

A sudden noise made him start up. The nurse was entering the room. It was broad daylight. The young wife in the armchair in front of him seemed as surprised as himself. She was somewhat pale, but still pretty, fresh-looking, and attractive, in spite of this night passed in a chair.

Madame Forestier suggested a stroll in the garden to Duroy, and they began to walk slowly round the little lawn, inhaling with pleasure the balmy air, laden with the scent of pine and eucalyptus. Suddenly she began to speak, without turning her head toward him, as he had done during the night upstairs. She uttered her words slowly in a low and serious voice:

"Look here, my dear friend, I have deeply reflected, already, on what you proposed to me, and I do not want you to go away without an answer. Besides, I am going to say neither yes nor no. It is necessary, after what you have said to me, that you should thoroughly understand what sort of a

woman I am, in order that you may no longer cherish the wish you expressed to me, in case you are not of a—of a—disposition to comprehend and bear with me. Understand me well. Marriage for me is not a charm but a partnership. I mean to be free, perfectly free, as to my ways, my acts, my going and coming. I could neither tolerate supervision, nor jealousy, nor discussion of my behavior. I should undertake, be it understood, never to compromise the name of the man who takes me as his wife, never to render him hateful and ridiculous. But this man must also undertake to see in me an equal, an ally, and not an inferior or an obedient and submissive wife. My notions, I know, are not those of every one, but I shall not change them. There you are. I will also add, do not answer me; it would be useless and unsuitable. We shall see each other again, and shall perhaps speak of all this again later on. Now, go for a stroll. I shall return to watch beside him. I shall see you this evening."

He printed a long kiss on her hand, and went away without uttering a word. That evening they only saw each other at dinner time. Then they retired to their rooms, both exhausted with fatigue.

Charles Forestier was buried the next day, without any funeral display, in the cemetery at Cannes. George Duroy wished to take the Paris express, which passed through the town at half-past one.

Madame Forestier drove with him to the station. They walked quietly up and down the platform pending the time for his departure, speaking of trivial matters.

The train rolled into the station. The journalist took his seat, and then got out again to have a few more moments' conversation with her, suddenly

seized as he was with sadness and a strong regret at leaving her, as though he were about to lose her forever.

A porter shouted: "Take your seats for Marseilles, Lyons, and Paris." Duroy got in and leaned out of the window to say a few words. The engine whistled, and the train began to move slowly on.

The young fellow, leaning out of the carriage, watched the woman standing still on the platform and following him with her eyes. Suddenly, as he was about to lose sight of her, he put his hand to his mouth and threw a kiss toward her. She returned it with a discreet and hesitating gesture.

CHAPTER IX

A WEDDING

DUROY returned to all his old habits.

Installed at present in the little ground-floor suite of rooms in the Rue de Constantinople, he lived soberly, like a man preparing a new existence for himself. His relations with Madame de Marelle had even assumed a conjugal aspect, as if he were practicing in advance for the coming event, and his mistress, often annoyed at the calm regularity of their union, repeated with a laugh: "You are still more domesticated than my husband; it was not worth while changing."

Madame Forestier had not yet returned. She was lingering at Cannes. He received a letter from her merely announcing her return about the middle of April, without a word of allusion to the farewell. He was waiting. His mind was thor-

oughly made up now to employ every means in order to marry her, if she seemed to hesitate. But he had faith in his luck, confidence in that power of seduction which he felt within him, a vague and irresistible power of which all women felt the influence.

A short note informed him that the decisive hour was at hand.

"I am in Paris. Come and see me.

"MADELEINE FORESTIER."

Nothing more. He received it by the nine-o'clock mail. He was at her residence at three on the same day. She held out both her hands to him, smiling with her pleasant smile, and they looked into each other's eyes for a few seconds. Then she said: "How good you were to come to me there under those terrible circumstances."

"I should have done anything you told me," he replied.

And they sat down. She asked the news, inquired about the Walters, about all the staff, about the paper. She had often thought about the paper.

"I miss it very much," she said, "really very much. I had become at heart a journalist. I cannot help it, I love the profession?"

Then she paused. He thought he understood, he thought he divined in her smile, in the tone of her voice, in her words themselves a kind of invitation, and, although he had promised to himself not to precipitate matters, he stammered out. "Well then, why—why—why should you not resume—this occupation—under—under the name of Duroy?"

She suddenly became serious again, and, placing her hand on his arm, murmured: "Do not let us speak of that yet a while."

But he divined that she accepted, and, falling at her knees, began to passionately kiss her hands, repeating: "Thanks, thanks; oh! how I love you."

"Listen," she said, in a serious tone, "I have not yet made up my mind to anything. However, it may be—Yes. But you must promise me the most absolute secrecy until I give you leave to speak."

He swore this and left, his heart overflowing with joy.

He was from that time on very discreet as regards the visits he paid her, and did not ask for any more definite consent on her part, for she had a way of speaking of the future, of saying "by and by," and of shaping plans in which these two lives were blended, which answered him better and more delicately than a formal acceptation.

Duroy worked hard and spent little, trying to save money so as not to be without a penny at the date fixed for his marriage, and becoming as close as he had been prodigal. The summer went by, and then the autumn, without any one suspecting anything, for they met very little, and only in the most natural way in the world.

One evening Madeleine, looking him straight in the eyes, said: "You have not yet announced our intentions to Madame de Marelle?"

"No, dear. Having promised you to be secret, I have not opened my mouth to a living soul."

"Well, it is about time to tell her. I will undertake to inform the Walters. You will do so this week, will you not?"

He blushed as he said: "Yes, to-morrow."

She had turned away her eyes in order not to notice his confusion, and said: "If you like, we will be married in the beginning of May. That will be a very good time."

"I obey you in all things joyfully."

"I had thought about one matter," she continued, "but it is rather difficult to explain."

"What is it?" he asked.

"Well, it is this, my dear boy. I am like all women. I have my weaknesses, my pettinesses. I love all that glitters, that catches the ear. I should have so delighted to have borne a noble name. Could you not, on the occasion of our marriage, ennoble yourself a little?"

She had blushed in her turn, as if she had proposed something indelicate.

He replied, simply enough: "I have often thought about it, but it did not seem to me so easy."

"Your native place is Canteleu?" she queried.

"Yes."

She hesitated, saying: "No, I do not like the termination. Come, cannot we modify this word Canteleu a little."

She had taken up a pen from the table, and was scribbling names and studying their physiognomy. All at once she exclaimed: "There! there it is!" and held out to him a paper, on which he read: "Madame Duroy de Cantel."

He reflected a few moments, and then said gravely: "Yes, that does very well."

She was delighted, and kept repeating: "Duroy de Cantel, Duroy de Cantel, Madame Duroy de Cantel. It is capital, capital." She went on with an air of conviction: "And you will see how easy it is to get every one to accept it. But one must know how to seize the opportunity, for it will be too late afterward. You must from to-morrow sign your descriptive articles D. de Cantel, and your 'Echoes' simply Duroy. It is done every day in the press, and no one will be astonished to see you

take a pseudonym. At the moment of our marriage we can modify it a little more, and tell our friends that you had given up the ' du ' out of modesty on account of your position, or even say nothing about it. What is your father's Christian name? "

" Alexander."

She murmured: " Alexander, Alexander," two or three times, listening to the sonorous roll of the syllables, and then wrote on a blank sheet of paper:

" Monsieur and Madame Alexander du Roy de Cantel have the honor to inform you of the marriage of Monsieur George du Roy de Cantel, their son, to Madame Madeleine Forestier."

She looked at her writing, holding it at a distance, charmed by the effect, and said: " With a little method we can manage whatever we wish."

When he found himself once more in the street, firmly resolved to call himself in future Du Roy, and even Du Roy de Cantel, it seemed to him that he had acquired fresh importance. He walked with more swagger, his head higher, his mustache fiercer, as a gentleman should walk. He felt in himself a species of joyous desire to say to the passers-by: " My name is Du Roy de Cantel."

He received a telegram from Madame de Marelle next morning saying that she would call at one o'clock. He waited for her somewhat feverishly, his mind made up to bring things to a point at once, to say everything right out, and then, when the first emotion had subsided, to argue cleverly in order to prove to her that he could not remain a bachelor forever, and that as Monsieur de Marelle insisted on living, he had been obliged to think of another than herself as a life companion. He felt moved, though, and when he heard her ring, his heart began to beat.

She entered the room, exclaiming: "Good morning, Bel-Ami." Then finding his manner cold, she looked at him and said: "What is the matter with you?"

"Sit down," said he; "we have to talk seriously."

She sat down without taking her hat off, only turning back her veil, and waited.

He had lowered his eyes, and was preparing the beginning of his spech. He commenced in a low tone of voice: "My dear one, you see me very uneasy, very sad, and very much embarrassed at what I have to admit to you. I really love you from the bottom of my heart, so that the fear of causing you pain afflicts me more than even the news I am going to tell you."

She grew pale, felt herself tremble, and stammered out: "What is the matter? Tell me at once."

He said in sad but resolute tones, with that feigned sorrow which we make use of to announce fortunate misfortunes: "I am going to be married."

She gave a sigh as of a woman about to faint, a painful sigh from the very depths of her bosom, and then began to choke and gasp without being able to speak.

He knelt down before her, without daring to touch her, however, and, more deeply moved by this silence than he would have been by a fit of anger, stammered out: "Clo! my darling Clo! just consider my situation, consider what I am. Oh, if I had been able to marry you, what happiness it would have been. But you are married. What could I do? Come, think of it now. I must take a place in society, and I cannot do it so long as I have not

a home. If you only knew. There are days when I have felt a longing to kill your husband."

He spoke in his soft, subdued, seductive voice, a voice which fell on the ear like music. He saw two tears slowly gather in the fixed and staring eyes of his mistress and then roll down her cheeks, while two more were ready to fall.

He murmured: "Do not cry, Clo; do not cry, I beg of you. You wring my heart."

Then she made an effort, a strong effort, to be proud and dignified, and asked, in the quivering tone of a woman about to burst into sobs: "Who is it?"

He hesitated a moment, and then, understanding that it was necessary, said: "Madeleine Forestier."

She rose. Duroy guessed that she was going away without saying a word, without reproach or forgiveness, and he felt hurt and humiliated to the bottom of his soul. Wishing to stay her, he threw his arms about her, saying: "I beg of you, do not go away like that."

Then she looked down on him from above with that moistened and despairing eye, at once so charming and so sad, which shows all the grief of a woman's heart, and gasped out: "I—I have nothing to say. I can do nothing. You—you are right. You—you have chosen well."

And, freeing herself by a backward movement, she left the room without his trying to detain her further.

Left to himself, he rose as bewildered as if he had received a blow on the head. Then, making up his mind, he muttered: "Well, it is all for the worse, or the better. It is over, and without a scene. It is just as well." And relieved from an

immense weight, suddenly feeling himself free, delivered, at ease as to his future life, he began to spar at the wall, hitting out with his fists in a kind of intoxication of strength and triumph as if he had been fighting Fate.

When Madame Forestier asked: "Have you told Madame de Marelle?" he quietly answered: "Yes."

She scanned him closely with her bright eyes, saying: "And did it not cause her any emotion?"

"No, not at all. She thought it, on the contrary, a very good idea."

The news was soon known. Some were astonished, others asserted that they had foreseen it; others, again, smiled, and let it be understood that they were not surprised.

The young man, who now signed his descriptive articles D. de Cantel, his "Echoes" Duroy, and the political articles which he was beginning to write from time to time Du Roy, passed half his time with his betrothed. She had decided that the marriage should be quite private, only the witnesses being present, and that they should leave the same evening for Rouen. They would go the next day to see the journalist's parents, and remain with them some days. Duroy had striven to get her to renounce this project, but not having been able to do so, had ended by giving in to it.

So the tenth of May having come, the newly married couple, having considered the religious ceremony useless since they had not invited any one, returned to finish packing their boxes after the brief civil ceremony at the Town Hall. They took the six o'clock train, which bore them away toward Normandy. They had scarcely exchanged twenty words up to the time that they found them-

selves alone in the railway carriage. As soon as they were on their way they looked at each other and began to laugh, to hide a certain feeling of awkwardness which they did not want to manifest.

The train slowly passed through the long station of Batignolles, and then crossed the mangy-looking plain extending from the fortifications to the Seine. When they crossed the bridge of Asnières, they were amused at the sight of the river covered with boats, fishermen, and oarsmen.

Duroy murmured: "I adore the suburbs of Paris. I have memories of dinners which I reckon among the pleasantest in my life."

"And the boats," she replied. "How nice it is to glide along at sunset."

Then they became silent, as though afraid to continue these outpourings as to their past life, and remained so, already enjoying, perhaps, the poetry of regret.

Duroy, seated face to face with his wife, took her hand and slowly kissed it, and kept pressing it gently, without her making any response to this appeal. At length he said: "It seems to me very funny that you should be my wife."

She seemed surprised as she said: "Why so?"

"I do not know. It seems strange to me. I want to kiss you, and I feel astonished at having the right to do so."

She calmly held out her cheek to him, which he kissed as he would have kissed that of a sister.

He continued: "The first time I saw you—you remember the dinner Forestier invited me to—I thought: 'Hang it all, if I could only find a wife like that.' Well, it's done. I have one."

She said in a low tone: "That is very nice,"

and looked him straight in the face shrewdly, and with smiling eyes.

He reflected: "I am too cold. I am too stupid. I ought to get along faster than this," and clasping her to him, kissed her with eager and quivering lips. She freed herself, and, quickly rising to her feet, said: "Come, George; do leave off. We are not children; we can very well wait till we get to Rouen."

He remained seated, very red and chilled by this sensible remark; then, having recovered more self-possession, he said, with some liveliness: "Very well, I will wait; but I shan't be able to say a dozen words till we get there. And remember that we are only passing through Poissy."

"I will do the talking then," she said, and sat down quietly beside him.

She spoke with precision of what they would do on their return. They must keep on the suite of apartments that she had resided in with her first husband, and Duroy would also inherit the duties and salaries of Forestier at the *Vie Française*. Before their marriage, besides, she had planned with the assurance of a man of business all the financial details of their household. They had married under a contract preserving to each of them their respective estates, and every incident that might arise —death, divorce, and the birth of one or more children—was duly provided for. The young fellow contributed a capital of four thousand francs, he said, but of this sum he had borrowed fifteen hundred. The rest was what he had saved during the year, in view of the event. Her contribution was forty thousand francs, which she said had been left her by Forestier.

She turned to him as a subject of conversation.

"He was a very steady, economical, hard-working fellow. He would have made a fortune in a very short time."

Duroy no longer listened, wholly absorbed by other thoughts. She stopped from time to time, to follow out some inward train of ideas, and then went on: "In three or four years you can be easily earning thirty to forty thousand francs a year. That is what Charles would have had if he had lived."

George, who had begun to find the lecture rather a long one, replied: "I thought we were not going to Rouen to talk about him," referring to a remark she had made.

She gave him a slight tap on the cheek, saying, with a laugh: "That is so. I am in the wrong."

He placed his hands on his knees, pretending to be a very good boy.

"You look like a simpleton like that," said she.

He replied, in the tone of a schoolboy stumbling through his lesson: "Yes, I do. I expect you to give me thorough instruction—in twenty lessons. Ten for the elements, reading, and grammar; ten for accomplishments and rhetoric. I don't know anything myself."

She exclaimed, highly amused:

"My dear little pupil, trust my experience, my great experience. Kisses in a railway train are not worth anything. They only upset one." Then she blushed still more as she murmured: "One should never eat cut wheat while it is green."

He chuckled, kindling at the double meanings from her pretty mouth, and made the sign of the cross, with a movement of the lips as though murmuring a prayer, adding aloud: "I have placed

myself under the protection of St. Anthony, patron saint of temptations. Now I am adamant."

Night was stealing gently on, folding in its transparent shadow, like fine gauze, the broad landscape stretching away to the right. This evening gloom, entering the open window, penetrated the souls of the now silent pair.

The whistle of the train announced that they were nearing a station. She remarked, flattening the ruffled locks about her forehead with the tips of her fingers: "It was very silly. We are quite childish."

But he was kissing her hands in turn with feverish rapidity, and replied: "I adore you, my little Madeleine."

Until they reached Rouen they remained almost motionless, cheek against cheek, their eyes turned to the window, through which, from time to time, the lights of houses could be seen in the darkness, satisfied with feeling themselves so close to each other.

They put up at a hotel overlooking the quay.

Next morning, as it was striking eight, Duroy looked at his wife, then suddenly, with the joyful impulse of the fortunate man who has just found a treasure, he clasped her in his arms, exclaiming: "My little Madeleine, I am sure that I love you ever so much, ever so much."

She smiled with her confident and satisfied smile, and murmured, as she returned his kisses: "And I, too—perhaps."

But he felt uneasy about the visit to his parents. He had already forewarned his wife, had prepared and lectured her, but he thought fit to do so again.

"You know," he said, "they are only rustics—country rustics, not theatrical ones."

She laughed. "I know that; you have told me so often enough. Come, get up and let me get up."

He jumped out of bed, and said, as he drew on his socks: "We shall be very uncomfortable there, very uncomfortable. There is only an old bed with a straw in my room. Spring mattresses are unknown at Canteleu."

She had put on her dressing gown—a white flannel dressing gown—which Duroy at once recognized. The sight of it was unpleasant to him. Why? His wife had, he was aware, a round dozen of these morning garments. She could not destroy them in order to buy a new one. No matter, he would have preferred that they were not the same she had worn with the other. It seemed to him that the soft, warm material must have retained something from its contact with Forestier.

They started an hour later, for they were to lunch with the old people, who had been notified some days previous. A rusty, open carriage bore them along with a noise of jolting hardware through a long and rather ugly boulevard, passed between some fields through which flowed a stream, and began to ascend the slope. Madeleine, somewhat fatigued, had dozed off beneath the penetrating caress of the sun, which warmed her delightfully as she lay stretched back in the old carriage, as though in a bath of light and country air.

Her husband awoke her, saying: "Look!"

They had halted two-thirds of the way up the slope, at a spot famous for its view, to which all tourists drive. They overlooked the long and broad valley through which the bright river flowed in sweeping curves.

The driver waited until the travelers' ecstasies were over. He knew from experience the duration

of the admiration of all the breeds of tourists. But when he started again, Duroy suddenly caught sight of two old people advancing toward them some hundreds of yards farther on, and jumped out, exclaiming: "There they are. I recognize them."

They were walking quickly and in silence to meet their long-looked-for boy, without noticing these city folk, followed by their carriage. They passed by, when George, who was laughing, cried out: "Good day, Daddy Duroy!"

They both stopped short, amazed at first, then stupefied with surprise. The old woman recovered herself first, and stammered, without advancing a step: "Is't thou, boy?"

The young fellow answered: "Yes, it is I, mother," and stepping up to her, kissed her on both cheeks with a son's hearty kiss. Then he rubbed his face against his father's, by way of greeting. Old Duroy had taken off his cap, a very high black silk cap, made Rouen-fashion, like those worn by cattle dealers.

Then George said: "This is my wife," and the two country people looked at Madeleine. They looked at her as one looks at a phenomenon, with an uneasy fear, blended with a species of approving satisfaction in the father, and in the mother with a kind of jealous enmity.

The man, who was of a joyous nature and inspired by a liveliness born of sweet cider and alcohol, grew bolder, and asked, with a twinkle in the corner of his eyes: "May I kiss her, all the same?"

"Certainly," replied his son; and Madeleine, ill at ease, held out both cheeks to the sounding smacks of the rustic, who then wiped his lips with the back of his hand. The old woman, in her turn,

kissed her daughter-in-law with a hostile reserve. No, this was not the daughter-in-law of her dreams; the plump, fresh housewife, rosy-cheeked as an apple and round as a brood mare; but not this fine lady, with her furbelows and her musk. For to the old girl all perfumes were musk.

They set out again, walking behind the carriage which bore the trunk of the newly wedded pair. The old fellow took his son by the arm, and keeping him a little in the rear of the others, asked with interest:

"Well, how goes business, lad?"

"Pretty fair."

"So much the better. Has thy wife any money?"

"Forty thousand francs," answered George.

His father gave vent to an admiring whistle, and could only murmur: "Dang it!" so overcome was he by the mention of the sum. Then he added in a tone of serious conviction: "Dang it all, she's a fine woman!" For he found her to his taste, and he had passed for a good judge in his day.

Madeleine and her mother-in-law were walking side by side, without exchanging a word. The two men rejoined them. They reached Father Duroy's tavern, "The Bellevue," a bit of a house consisting of a ground floor and a garret, which stood at the beginning of the village to the left. A pine branch above the door indicated, in ancient fashion, that thirsty folk could enter.

The things were laid for lunch, in the common room of the tavern, on two tables placed together and covered with two napkins. A neighbor, come in to help serve lunch, bowed on seeing a fine lady appear; and then, recognizing George, exclaimed: "Good Lord! is that you, youngster?"

He replied gayly: "Yes, it is I, Mother Brulin," and kissed her as he had kissed his father and mother. Then turning to his wife, he said: "Come into our room and take your hat off."

They were ushered through a door to the right, into an unheated room with tiled floor, whitewashed walls, and a bed with white cotton curtains. A crucifix above a cup of holy water and two colored pictures, one representing Paul and Virginia under a blue palm tree, and the other Napoleon the First on a yellow horse, were the only ornaments of this clean and dispiriting apartment.

As soon as they were alone, he kissed Madeleine, saying: "I am glad to see the old folks again. When one is in Paris one does not think about it; but when one meets again, it gives one pleasure. all the same."

But his father, thumping the partition with his fist, cried out: "Come along, come along; the soup is ready," and they had to sit down to table.

It was a long country repast, with a succession of ill-assorted dishes, a sausage after a leg of mutton, and an omelette after the sausage. Father Duroy, excited by cider and some glasses of wine, turned on the tap of his choicest jokes—those he reserved for great occasions of festivity—smutty adventures that had happened, as he maintained, to friends of his.

Mother Duroy did not speak, but remained sad and glum, watching her daughter-in-law out of the corner of her eye, with hatred awakened in her heart—the hatred of an old toiler, an old rustic with fingers worn and limbs bent by hard work—for this lady, who inspired her with the repulsion of an accursed creature, an impure being, created for idleness and sin.

Madeleine scarcely ate or spoke, but looked sad, though she had the usual mournful, resigned smile. She was downcast. Why? She had wanted to come. She had not been unaware that she was going among country folk—poor country folk. What had she dreamed they would be like, she who did not usually dream? Did she know herself? Do not women always hope for something that is not? Had she fancied them more poetical? No; but perhaps better informed, more noble, more affectionate, more ornamental. She recalled her own mother, of whom she never spoke to any one—a governess, brought up at Saint Denis, and dead from poverty and grief when she, Madeleine, was twelve years old. An unknown hand had had her brought up. Her father, no doubt. Who was he? She did not exactly know, although she had vague suspicions.

The lunch still dragged on. Customers were now coming in and shaking hands with old Duroy, uttering exclamations of wonder on seeing his son, and slyly winking as they scanned the young wife out of the corner of their eye, which was as much as to say: "Hang it, she's no fool, George Duroy's wife." Others, less intimate, sat down at the wooden tables, calling for "A pot," "A jugful," "Two brandies," "A camphor julep," and began to play at dominoes, noisily rattling the little bits of black and white bone.

Mother Duroy kept passing to and fro, serving the customers with her melancholy air, taking money and wiping the tables with the corner of her blue apron.

As soon as dinner was over, Madeleine drew her husband out of the house, in order not to stay in this gloomy room, always reeking with the rank

smell of old pipes and spilt liquor. As soon as they were outside, he said: "You are tired of it already."

She began to protest, but he stopped her, saying: "No, I saw it very plainly. If you like, we will leave to-morrow."

"Very well," she murmured.

They strolled gently onward. They had entered a narrow path, overshadowed by tall trees and running between two lines of shrubbery of impenetrable blackness.

"Where are we?" asked she.

"In the forest," he replied.

"It is a large one?"

"Very large; one of the largest in France."

An odor of earth, trees, and moss—that fresh yet old scent of the woods, made up of the sap of bursting buds and the dead and mouldering foliage of the thickets—seemed to linger in the path. Raising her head, Madeleine could see the stars through the tree tops; and although no breeze stirred the boughs, she could yet feel around her the vague quivering of this ocean of leaves. A strange thrill shot through her soul and fleeted across her skin—a strange pain gripped her at the heart. Why? She did not understand. But it seemed to her that she was lost, engulfed, surrounded by perils, abandoned by every one, alone; alone in the world, beneath this living vault quivering there above her.

She murmured: "I am rather frightened. I should like to go back."

"Well, let us do so."

"And—we will leave for Paris to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

She slept badly, continually aroused by all the

country sounds so new to her—the cry of the screech owl, the grunting of a pig in a sty adjoining the house, and the noise of a cock who kept on crowing from midnight. She was up and ready to start at daybreak.

When George announced to his parents that he was going back, they were both astonished; then they understood the origin of this wish.

The father merely said: "Shall I see you again soon?"

"Yes; in course of the summer."

The old woman growled: "I hope you won't regret what you have done."

He left them two hundred francs as a present to soothe their feelings, and the carriage, which a boy had been sent in quest of, having made its appearance at about ten o'clock, the newly married couple embraced the old country folk and started off once more.

"Well, that's good."

As they were descending the hill, Duroy began to laugh.

"There," he said, "I had warned you. I ought not to have introduced you to Monsieur and Madame Du Roy de Cantel, Senior."

She began to laugh, too, and replied: "I am delighted now. They are good folk, whom I am beginning to like very well. I will send them some presents from Paris." Then she murmured: "Du Roy de Cantel, you will see that no one will be astonished at the terms of the notification of our marriage. We will say that we have been staying for a week with your parents on their estate." And bending toward him, she kissed the tip of his mustache, saying: "Good morning, Georgey."

He replied: "Good morning, Maisie," as he passed an arm round her waist.

In the valley below they could see the broad river like a ribbon of silver unrolled beneath the morning sun, the factory chimneys belching forth their clouds of smoke into the sky, and the pointed spires rising above the old town.

CHAPTER X

SUSPICION

THE Duroys had been back in Paris a couple of days, and the journalist had taken up his old work, pending the moment when he should definitely assume Forestier's duties, and give himself wholly up to politics. He was going home that evening to his predecessor's abode to dinner, with a light heart and a desire to embrace his wife. Passing by a florist's at the end of the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, he was struck with the notion of buying a bouquet for Madeleine, and chose a large bunch of half-opened roses, a very mass of perfumed buds.

At each story of his new staircase he eyed himself complacently in the mirrors, the sight of which continually recalled to him his first visit to the house.

He rang the bell, having forgotten his key, and

the same manservant, whom he had also kept on by his wife's advice, opened the door.

"Has your mistress come home?" asked George.

"Yes, sir."

But on passing through the dining-room he was greatly surprised to find the table laid for three, and the hangings of the drawing-room door being looped up, saw Madeleine arranging in a vase on the mantel a bunch of roses exactly similar to his own. He was annoyed, displeased; it was as though he had been robbed of his idea, his little attention, and all the pleasure he anticipated from it.

"You have invited some one to dinner, then?" he inquired, as he entered the room.

She answered without turning around, and continuing to arrange the flowers: "Yes and no. It is my old friend, Comte de Vaudrec, who has been accustomed to dine here every Monday, and who has come as usual."

George murmured: "Ah! very good."

He remained standing behind her, bouquet in hand, with a longing to hide it or throw it away. He said, however, "I have brought you some roses."

She turned round suddenly, smiling, and exclaiming:

"Ah! how nice of you to have thought of that."

And she held out her arms and lips to him with an outburst of joy so real that he felt consoled. She took the flowers, smelled them, and with the vivacity of a delighted child placed them in the empty vase opposite the other. Then she murmured, as she looked at the effect: "How glad I am! My mantelpiece is furnished now." She added almost immediately, in a tone of conviction: "You know Vau-

dree is awfully nice; you will be friends with him at once."

A ring at the door announced the Count. He entered quietly, quite at his ease, as though he were at home. After having gallantly kissed the young wife's fingers, he turned to the husband and cordially held out his hand, saying:

"How goes it, my dear Duroy?"

It was no longer his former stiff and starched bearing, but an affable one, showing that the situation was no longer the same. The journalist, surprised, strove to make himself agreeable in response to these advances. Within five minutes one might have supposed they had known and loved one another for ten years.

Then Madeleine, whose face was radiant, said: "I will leave you together. I must go and see about dinner." And she went out, followed by a glance from both men. When she returned, she found them talking theatricals apropos of a new play, and so thoroughly of the same opinion that a species of rapid friendship awoke in their eyes at the discovery of this absolute identity of ideas.

The dinner was delightful, so intimate and cordial, and the Count stayed on quite late, so comfortable did he feel in this pretty new household.

As soon as he had left, Madeleine said to her husband: "Is he not perfect? He improves in every way on acquaintance. He is a true friend—safe, devoted, faithful. Ah, without him——"

She did not finish the sentence, and George replied: "Yes, I find him very agreeable. I think that we shall get on very well together."

She resumed: "You do not know, but we have some work to do together before going to bed. I had not time to speak to you about it before din-

ner, because Vaudrec came in at once. I have had some important news, news from Morocco. It was Laroche-Mathieu, the deputy, the future minister, who brought it me. We must work up an important article, a sensational one. I have the facts and figures. We will set to work at once. Bring the lamp."

He took it, and they passed into the study. The same books were ranged on the bookshelves, on top of which were the three vases bought at the Golfe Juan by Forestier on the eve of his death. Under the table the dead man's rug awaited the feet of Duroy, who, on sitting down, took up an ivory penholder slightly chewed at the end by the other's teeth. Madeleine leaned against the mantelpiece, and having lit a cigarette, related her news, and then explained her ideas and the plan of the article she wished written. He listened attentively, scribbling notes as he did so, and when she had finished, raised objections, took up the subject again, enlarging it, and developing in his turn not the plan of an article, but of a campaign against the existing Ministry. This attack would be the commencement. His wife had left off smoking, so strongly was her interest aroused, so vast was the vision that opened before her as she followed out George's train of thought.

She murmured from time to time: "Yes; yes. That is very good. That is capital. That is very clever."

And when he had finished speaking in turn, she said: "Now let us write."

But he always found it hard to begin and had difficulty in finding words. Then she approached softly, and, leaning over his shoulder, began to whisper sentences in his ear. From time to time

she would hesitate and ask: "Is that what you want to say?"

He answered: "Yes; exactly."

Duroy, from time to time, added a few original lines which gave force and depth to the line of attack. When their article was finished, George read it aloud.

They both thought it excellent, and smiled, delighted and surprised, as if each had become a revelation to the other.

The article appeared with the signature of George du Roy de Cantel, and caused a great sensation. There was an excitement about it in the Chamber. Daddy Walter congratulated the author, and intrusted him with the political editorship of the *Vie Française*. The "Echoes" were taken up again by Boisrenard.

Then there began in the paper a violent and cleverly conducted campaign against the Ministry. The attack, now ironical, now serious, now jesting, and now virulent, but always skillful and based on facts, was delivered with a certitude and continuity which astonished every one. Other papers continually cited the *Vie Française*, taking whole passages from it, and those in office asked themselves whether they could not gag this unknown and inveterate foe with the gift of a prefecture.

Duroy became a political celebrity. He felt his influence increasing by the pressure of hands and the lifting of hats. His wife, too, filled him with astonishment and admiration by the ingenuity of her mind, the accuracy of her information, and the number of her acquaintances. Continually he would find in his drawing-room, on returning home, a senator, a deputy, a magistrate, a general, who treated Madeleine as an old friend, with sober familiarity.

Where had she met all these people? In society, so she said. But how had she been able to gain their confidence and their affection? He could not understand it.

"She would make a formidable diplomatist," he thought.

She often came in late at meal times, out of breath, flushed, quivering, and before even taking off her veil would say: "I have something good to-day. Fancy, the Minister of Justice has just appointed two magistrates who belonged to the fusion committees. We will give him a dose he will not forget in a hurry."

And they would give the minister a dose, and another the next day, and a third the day after. The deputy Laroche-Mathieu, who dined at the Rue Fontaine every Tuesday, after the Comte de Vaudrec, who began the week, would shake hands with husband and wife with an appearance of extreme delight. He never ceased repeating: "By Jove, what a campaign! If we don't succeed after that!"

He hoped, indeed, to succeed in getting hold of the portfolio of foreign affairs, which he had had in view for a long time.

It was said everywhere of him: "Laroche will be a minister;" and he believed more firmly than any one else that he would be. He was one of the chief stockholders in Daddy Walter's paper, and his colleague and partner in many financial schemes.

Duroy backed him up with confidence and with vague hopes as to the future. He was, besides, only continuing the work begun by Forestier, to whom Laroche-Mathieu had promised the Cross of the Legion of Honor when the day of triumph should

come. The decoration would adorn the breast of Madeleine's second husband, that was all. Nothing was changed in the main.

It was seen about this time that Duroy's comrades organized a joke against him, at which he was beginning to grow angry. They no longer called him anything but Forestier. As soon as he entered the office, some one would call out: "I say, Forestier!"

He would pretend not to hear, and would look for the letters in his pigeonhole. The voice would resume in louder tones: "Hi, Forestier."

Daddy Walter himself had declared, when astonishment was expressed at the flagrant similarity in style and inspiration between the leaders of the new political editor and his predecessor: "Yes, it is Forestier, but a fuller, stronger, more manly Forestier."

This wounded his pride, wounded his vanity, that touchy pride and vanity of the writer which produce the nervous susceptibility, ever on the alert, equally in the reporter and the genial poet. The word "Forestier" made his ears tingle. He dreaded to hear it, and felt himself redden when he did so. This name was to him a biting jest, more than a jest, almost an insult. It said to him: "It is your wife who does your work as she did that of the other. You would be nothing without her."

His rancor was daily increased by a thousand insignificant details, which stung him like pin pricks, by the incessant reminders of the other arising out of a word from Madeline, from the manservant, from the waiting maid.

One evening toward the end of June, as he was smoking a cigarette at the window, the fineness of

the evening inspired him with a wish for a drive, and he said: "Madeleine, shall we go as far as the Bois de Boulogne?"

"Why, yes."

They took an open carriage and drove up the Champs Elyseés, and then along the main avenue of the Bois de Boulogne.

"Do you remember the forest close to your home, how gloomy it was?" said she. "It seemed to me that it was full of horrible creatures, and that there was no end to it, while here it is delightful. One feels caresses in the very breeze, and I know that Sèvres lies on the other side of the wood."

He replied: "Oh, in the forest at home there was nothing but deer, foxes, and wild boars, and here and there the hut of a forester."

This word, akin to the dead man's name, issuing from his mouth, surprised him just as if some one had shouted it out to him from the depths of a thicket, and he became suddenly silent, assailed anew by the strange and persistent uneasiness, the gnawing, invincible, jealous irritation that had been spoiling his existence for some time past. After a minute or so he asked: "Did you ever come here like this of an evening with Charles?"

"Yes, often," she answered.

And all of a sudden he was seized with a wish to return home, a nervous desire that gripped him at the heart. But the image of Forestier had returned to his mind and possessed and laid hold of him. He could no longer speak or think of anything else, and said in a spiteful tone: "I say, Maisie!"

"Yes, dear."

"Did you ever deceive poor Charles?"

He had put his lips close to his wife's ear and whispered: "Come, come, confess."

She jerked herself away, and said abruptly: "You are crazy. As if one answered such questions."

She said this in so singular a tone that a cold shiver ran through her husband's veins, and he remained dumfounded, astonished, almost breathless, as though from some mental shock.

The carriage was now passing along the lake, on which the sky seemed to have scattered its stars. Two swans, vaguely outlined, were swimming slowly, scarcely visible in the shadow. George called out to the driver: "Turn back!" and the carriage returned, meeting the others going at a walk, with their lanterns gleaming like eyes in the night.

In what a strange manner she had said it!

"Was it a confession?" Duroy kept asking himself.

And this almost certainty that she had deceived her first husband now drove him wild with rage. He longed to beat her, to strangle her, to tear her hair out. Oh, if she had only replied: "But, darling, if I had deceived him it would have been with yourself," how he would have kissed, clasped, worshiped her.

The carriage was going faster. It passed the fortifications. Duroy saw before him a reddish light in the sky like the glow of an immense forge, and heard a vast, confused, continuous rumor, made up of countless different sounds, the breath of Paris panting this summer night like an exhausted giant.

George reflected: "I should be very stupid to fret about it. Every one for himself. Fortune

favors the bold. Everything is only egotism. Egotism as regards ambition and fortune is better than egotism as regards woman and love."

Madeleine, to whom this silence was irksome, said: "Suppose we have an ice at Tortoni's café before going in."

He glanced at her sideways. Her delicate profile was lit up by the bright light from the row of gas jets of a café. He thought: "She is pretty. Well, so much the better. Jack is as good as his master, my dear. But if ever they catch me worrying again about you, it will be warm at the North Pole." Then he replied aloud: "Certainly, dear," and in order that she should not guess anything, he kissed her.

It seemed to the young wife that her husband's lips were frozen. He smiled, however, with his wonted smile, as he gave her his hand to alight in front of the café.

CHAPTER XI

ENTER MADAME WALTER

N reaching the office next day, Duroy sought out Boisrenard.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I have a service to ask of you. It has been considered a joke for some time past to call me Forestier. I begin to find it very stupid. Will you have the kindness to quietly let our friends know that I will slap the face of the first that starts this joke again? It will be for them to reflect whether it is worth risking a sword thrust for. I address myself to you because you are a calm-minded fellow, who can hinder matters from coming to a painful crisis, and also because you were my second."

Boisrenard undertook the commission. Duroy

went out on business, and returned an hour later. No one called him Forestier.

When he reached home he heard ladies' voices in the drawing-room, and asked: "Who is there?"

"Madame Walter and Madame de Marelle," replied the servant.

His heart beat fast for a moment, and then he said to himself: "Well, let's see," and opened the door.

Clotilde was beside the fireplace, standing in a ray of light from the window. It seemed to George that she grew slightly paler on perceiving him. Having first bowed to Madame Walter and her two daughters, seated like two sentinels on each side of their mother, he turned toward Madame de Marelle. She held out her hand, and he took it and pressed it meaningly, as though to say: "I still love you." She responded to this pressure.

He inquired: "How have you been during the century that has elapsed since our last meeting?"

She replied with perfect ease: "Quite well; and you, Bel-Ami?" and, turning to Madeleine, added: "You will allow me to call him Bel-Ami still?"

"Certainly, dear; I will allow whatever you please."

A shade of irony seemed hidden in these words.

Madame Walter spoke of an entertainment that was going to be given by Jacques Rival at his residence, a grand fencing match, at which ladies of fashion were to be present, saying: "It will be very interesting. But I am so vexed we have no one to take us there, my husband being obliged to be away at that time."

Duroy at once offered his services. She accepted, saying: "My daughters and I will be very much obliged to you."

He looked at the younger daughter and thought: "She is not at all bad-looking, this little Susan; not at all."

The elder sister, Rose, was ugly, dull-looking, and insignificant; one of those girls whom you do not notice, do not speak to, and do not talk about.

The mother rose, and, turning to George, said: "Then I may count upon you for next Thursday, two o'clock?"

"You may count upon me, Madame," he replied.

As soon as she had taken her departure, Madame de Marelle rose in turn, saying: "Good-afternoon, Bel-Ami."

As soon as he was alone with his wife, Madeleine broke out into a laugh, a frank, gay laugh, and, looking him fair in the face, said: "You know that Madame Walter is smitten with you."

"Nonsense," he answered incredulously.

"It is so, I tell you; she spoke to me about you with wild enthusiasm. It is strange on her part. She would like to find two husbands such as you for her daughters. Fortunately, as regards her, such things are of no moment."

He did not understand what she meant, and inquired: "How of no moment?"

She replied, with the conviction of a woman certain of the soundness of her judgment: "Oh, Madame Walter is one of those who have never even had a whisper about them, never, you know, never. She is unassailable in every respect. Her husband you know as well as I do. But with her it is quite another thing. She has suffered enough through marrying a Jew, but she has remained faithful to him. She is an honest woman."

Duroy was surprised. "I thought her a Jewess, too," said he.

"She, not at all. She is a lady patroness of all the good works of the Church of the Madeleine. Her marriage, even, was celebrated religiously. I do not know whether there was a dummy baptism as regards Monsieur Walter, or whether the church winked at it."

George murmured: "Ah! so she likes me."

"Positively and thoroughly. If you were single, I should advise you to ask for the hand of—Susan, eh? rather than that of Rose."

He replied, twisting his mustache: "Hum! their mother is not yet out of date."

Madeleine, somewhat out of patience, answered: "Their mother! I wish you may get her, dear. But I am not alarmed on that score. It is not at her age that a woman is guilty of a first fault. One must set about it earlier."

George was reflecting: "If it were true, though, that I could have married Susan." Then he shrugged his shoulders: "Bah! it is absurd. As if her father would ever had accepted me as a suitor."

He promised himself, though, to keep a more careful watch in the future over Madame Walter's bearing toward him, without asking whether he might ever derive any advantage from this.

On the Thursday he said to Madeleine: "Are not you coming to the fencing match at Rival's?"

"No. It would not interest me. I shall go to the Chamber of Deputies."

He went to call for Madame Walter in an open landau, for the weather was delightful. He was surprised at seeing her so handsome and young-looking. She had the calm, lady-like manner, a certain

matronly bearing that caused her to pass almost unnoticed before the eyes of gallants. She scarcely spoke, besides, except to make ordinary, conventional and commonplace remarks, her ideas being proper, methodical, well-ordered, and void of all extravagance.

Her daughter, Susan, in pink, looked like a newly varnished Watteau, while her elder sister seemed the governess intrusted with the care of this pretty doll of a girl.

Before Rival's door a line of carriages were drawn up. Duroy offered Madame Walter his arm, and they went in.

The fencing match was to take place under the patronage of the wives of all the senators and deputies connected with the *Vie Française,* for the benefit of the orphans of the Sixth Arrondissement of Paris. Madame Walter had promised to come with her daughters, while refusing the position of lady patroness, for she only aided with her name works undertaken by the clergy. Not that she was very devout, but her marriage with a Jew obliged her, in her own opinion, to observe a certain religious attitude, and the gathering organized by the journalist had a species of Republican import that might be construed as anti-clerical.

Jacques Rival received the guests in the hall of his dwelling, where a refreshment buffet had been fitted up, the cost of which was to be deducted from the receipts. He indicated with an amiable gesture the little staircase leading to the cellar, saying: "Downstairs, ladies, downstairs; the match will take place in the basement."

He darted forward to meet the wife of the manager, and then shaking Duroy by the hand, said: "How are you, Bel-Ami?"

His friend was surprised, and exclaimed: "Who told you that——"

Rival interrupted with: "Madame Walter, here, who thinks the nickname a very nice one."

Madame Walter blushed, saying: "Yes, I will admit that, if I knew you better, I would do like little Laurine and call you Bel-Ami, too; the name suits you very well."

Duroy laughed, as he replied: "But I beg of you, madame, to do so."

She had lowered her eyes and remarked: "No. We are not sufficiently intimate."

He murmured: "Will you allow me to hope that we shall become more so?"

"Well, we will see," said she.

He moved aside to let her precede him at the beginning of the narrow stairs lit by a gas jet.

Madame Walter and her daughters reached the seats reserved for them in the front row. Duroy, having installed them there, was about to quit them, saying: "I am obliged to leave you; we men must not monopolize the seats."

But Madame Walter remarked, in a hesitating tone: "I should very much like to have you with us all the same. You can tell me the names of the fencers. Come, if you stand close to the end of the seat you will not be in any one's way." She looked at him with her large, mild eyes, and persisted, saying: "Come, stay with us, Monsieur Bel-Ami. We have need of you."

He replied: "I will obey with pleasure, madame."

On all sides could be heard the remark: "It is very funny, this cellar; very pretty, too."

George knew it well, this vault. He recalled the morning he had passed there on the eve of his duel,

alone in front of the little white cardboard target that had glared at him from the depths of the inner cellar like a huge and terrible eye.

The voice of Jacques Rival sounded from the staircase: " Just about to begin, ladies."

They were two good professional fencers of second-class merit. They made their appearance, both sparely built, with a military air, and somewhat stiff gestures. Having gone through the salute like automatons, they began to attack one another, resembling in their costumes of white leather and duck two comedy clowns fighting for fun, and the six judges nodded with their air of connoisseurs.

The first couple of fencers were succeeded by Monsieur Planton and Monsieur Carapin, a civilian professional and a military professional. Monsieur Planton was very little, and Monsieur Carapin immensely stout. One would have thought that the first thrust would have reduced his volume like that of a balloon. People laughed. Monsieur Planton skipped about like a monkey; Monsieur Carapin only moved his arm, the rest of his frame being paralyzed by fat.

Then came Monsieur Porion and Monsieur Lapalme, a professional and an amateur, who gave way to exaggerated gymnastics; charging furiously at one another, obliging the judges to scuttle away with their chairs; crossing and re-crossing from one end of the platform to the other, one advancing and the other retreating, with vigorous and comic leaps and bounds. They indulged in little backward springs that made the ladies laugh, and long bounds forward that caused them some emotion. This galloping assault was aptly criticised by some young rascal, who sang out: " Don't kill yourselves over it; it is a time job! " The spectators, shocked at

this want of taste, cried " Sh! " The judgment of the experts was passed round.

The first half of the entertainment was concluded by a very fine bout between Jacques Rival and the celebrated Belgian professor, Lebegue. Rival greatly pleased the ladies.

The heat down below was getting terrible. Cries of " More air," " Something to drink," were heard.

A loud voice shouted: " We are suffocating down here. Finish quickly, and let us be off." Another cried out: " The collection." And the whole of the public, gasping, but good-humored all the same, repeated: " The collection, the collection."

Six ladies began to pass along between the seats, and the sound of money falling into the collection pouches could be heard.

Duroy pointed out the celebrities to Madame Walter, There were men of fashion and journalists, those attached to the great newspapers, the old established newspapers, which looked down upon the *Vie Française* with certain reserve, the fruit of their experience. They had witnessed the death of so many of these politico-financial sheets, offspring of a suspicious partnership and crushed by the fall of a ministry. There were also painters and sculptors, who are generally men with a taste for sport; a poet who was also a member of the Academy, and who was pointed out generally, and a number of distinguished foreigners.

Some one called out: " Good-day, my dear fellow." It was the Comte de Vaudrec. Making his excuses to the ladies, Duroy hastened to shake hands with him. On returning he remarked: " What a charming fellow Vaudrec is! How thoroughly blood tells in him! "

Madame Walter did not reply. She was some-

what fatigued, and her bosom rose with an effort every time she drew breath, which caught the eye of Duroy. From time to time he caught a glance, a troubled, hesitating glance which lighted upon him, and was at once averted; and he said to himself: "Eh! What! Have I caught her, too?"

But by degrees the crowd worked their way up the little staircase. At last they would be able to get something to drink. There was an outburst of indignation when they found that those who could not get into the crowded cellar had stripped the refreshment buffet, and had then gone away, declaring that it was very impolite to bring together two hundred people and not give them anything to look at. There was not a cake, not a drop of champagne, syrup, or beer left; not a sweetmeat, not a fruit—nothing. They had sacked, pillaged, swept away everything. These details were related by the servants, who pulled long faces to hide their impulse to laugh right out. "The ladies were worse than the gentlemen," they asserted, "and ate and drank enough to make themselves ill." It was like the story of the survivors after the sack of a captured town.

There was nothing to do but to leave. Gentlemen openly regretted the twenty francs given at the collection; they were indignant that those upstairs should have feasted without paying anything. The lady patronesses had collected upward of three thousand francs. All expenses paid, there remained two hundred and twenty francs for the orphans of the Sixth Arrondissement.

Duroy, escorting the Walter family, waited for his landau. As he drove back with them, seated opposite Madame Walter, he again caught her caressing and fugitive glance, which seemed disturbed.

He returned home joyously. Madeleine was waiting for him in the drawing-room.

"I have some news," said she. "The Morocco affair is becoming complicated. France may very likely send out an expeditionary force within a few months. At all events it will be made a pretext to upset the Ministry, and Laroche-Mathieu will profit by this to get hold of the portfolio of foreign affairs."

Duroy, to tease his wife, pretended not to believe anything of the kind. They would never be mad enough to begin the Tunisian bungle over again. But she shrugged her shoulders impatiently, saying: "But I tell you it is so, it is so! You don't understand that it is a matter of money. Now-a-days in political complications we must not ask: 'Who is the woman?' but 'What is the deal?'"

Hs murmured "Bah" in a contemptuous tone in order to excite her.

Madeleine turned her back on him, disdaining to pursue the subject; and then, after a moment's silence, resumed: "We shall have visitors on Tuesday. Madame Laroche-Mathieu is coming to dinner with the Vicomtesse de Percemur. Will you invite Rival and Norbert de Varenne? I will call tomorrow and ask Madame Walter and Madame de Marelle. Perhaps we shall have Madame Rissolin, too."

For some time past she had been strengthening her connections, making use of her husband's political influence to attract to her house, willy-nilly, the wives of the senators and deputies who had need of the support of the *Vie Française*.

George replied: "Very well. I will see about Rival and Norbert."

The next day, as she was to go and invite Ma-

dame Walter, he resolved to forestall her in order to catch the latter alone and see if she really cared for him. It amused and flattered him. And then—why not?—if it were possible.

He arrived at the Boulevard Malesherbes about two, and was shown into the drawing-room, where he waited till Madame Walter made her appearance, her hand outstretched with pleased eagerness, saying: "What good wind brings you hither?"

"No good wind, but the wish to see you. Some power has brought me here, I do not know why, for I have nothing to say to you. I came, here I am; will you forgive me this early visit and the frankness of this explanation?"

He uttered this in a gallant and jesting tone, with a smile on his lips. She was astonished, and colored somewhat, stammering: "But really—I do not understand—you surprise me."

He observed: "It is a declaration made jestingly, in order not to alarm you."

They had sat down in front of one another. She took the matter pleasantly, saying: "A serious declaration?"

"Yes. For a long time I have been wanting to utter it—for a very long time. But I dared not. They say you are so strict, so rigid."

She had recovered her assurance, and observed: "Why to-day, then?"

"I do not know." Then, lowering his voice, he added: "Or, rather, because I have been thinking of nothing but you since yesterday."

She stammered, growing suddenly pale: "Come, enough of nonsense; let us speak of something else."

But he had fallen at her feet so suddenly that she was frightened. She tried to rise, but he kept her seated by the strength of his two arms passed round

her waist, and repeated in a voice of passion: " Yes, it is true that I have loved you madly for a long time past. Do not answer me. What would you have? I am mad. I love you. Oh, if you knew how I love you! "

She was suffocating, gasping, and strove to speak, without being able to utter a word. She pushed him away with her two hands, having seized him by the hair to hinder the approach of the mouth that she felt coming toward her own. She kept turning her head from right to left and from left to right with a rapid motion, closing her eyes in order no longer to see him. He touched her through her dress, handled her, pressed her, and she almost fainted under this strong and rude caress. Then he got up, exclaimed " Farewell, farewell," and rushed away.

He quietly took his stick in the hall and gained the street, saying to himself: " By Jove, I believe I have not made a mistake! "

On returning home at his usual time, he said to his wife: " Well, have you secured all the people for your dinner? "

She answered: " Yes, there is only Madame Walter, who is not quite sure whether she will be free to come."

He shrugged his shoulders, saying: " Oh, yes, she'll come."

He was not certain, however, and remained anxious until the day of the dinner. That very morning Madeleine received a note from her: " I have managed to get free from my engagements with great difficulty, and shall be with you this evening. But my husband cannot accompany me."

He awaited her appearance with some slight uneasiness. She came, very calm, rather cool, and

slightly haughty. He became humble, discreet, and submissive. Madame Laroche-Mathieu and Madame Rissolin accompanied their husbands. The Vicomtesse de Percemur talked society. Madame de Marelle looked charming in a strangely fanciful toilet, a species of Spanish costume in black and yellow, which set off her neat figure, her bosom, her rounded arms, and her birdlike head.

Duroy had Madame Walter on his right hand, and during dinner only spoke to her on serious topics, and with an exaggerated respect. From time to time he glanced at Clotilde. "She is really prettier and fresher looking than ever," he thought. Then his eyes returned to his wife, whom he found not bad-looking either, although he retained toward her a hidden, tenacious, and evil anger.

But Madame Walter excited him by the difficulty of victory, and by that novelty always desired by man. She wanted to return home early. "I will escort you," said he.

She refused, but he persisted, saying: "Why will not you permit me? You will wound me keenly. Do not let me think you have not forgiven me. You see how quiet I am."

She answered: "But you cannot desert your guests like that."

He smiled. "But I shall only be away twenty minutes. They will not even notice it. If you refuse, you will cut me to the heart."

She murmured: "Well, then, I agree, if you will be discreet."

But as soon as they were in the carriage he seized her hand, and kissing it passionately, exclaimed: "I love you, I love you. Let me tell you that much. I will not touch you. I only want to repeat to you that I love you."

She stammered: "Oh, after what you promised me! This is wrong, very wrong."

He whispered in her ear, understanding that he must capture her by degrees, this simple woman, that he must get her to make appointments with him, where she would at first, where he wished afterward. "Listen, I must see you; I shall wait for you at your door like a beggar; but I will see you, I will see you to-morrow."

She repeated: "No, do not come. I shall not receive you. Think of my daughters."

"Then tell me where I can meet you—in the street, no matter where, at whatever hour you like, provided I see you. I will bow to you; I will say: 'I love you,' and I will go away."

She hesitated, bewildered. And as the brougham entered the gateway of her residence she murmured hurriedly: "Well, then, I shall be at the Church of the Trinity to-morrow at half-past three." Then, having alighted, she said to her coachman: "Drive Monsieur Duroy back to his house."

As he re-entered his home, his wife asked: "Where did you go?"

He replied, in a low tone: "I went to the telegraph office to send off a message."

Madame de Marelle approached them. "You will see me home, Bel-Ami," said she. "You know I only came such a distance to dinner on that condition." And, turning to Madeleine, she added: "You are not jealous?"

Madame Duroy answered, slowly: "Not overmuch."

Clotilde, wrapped in lace, said to Madeleine as she went out: "Your dinner was perfection. In a little while you will have the leading political drawing-room in Paris."

As soon as she was alone with George she clasped him in her arms, exclaiming: "Oh, Bel-Ami, I love you more and more every day."

The cab conveying them rocked like a ship.

"It is not so pleasant," said she.

He answered! "Oh, no." But he was thinking of Madame Walter.

CHAPTER XII

A FRESH CONQUEST

THE Place de la Trinité lay, almost deserted, under a dazzling July sun. An oppressive heat was crushing Paris. It was as though the upper air, scorched and deadened, had fallen upon the city—a thick, burning air that pained the chests inhaling it. The fountains in front of the church fell lazily.

Duroy pulled out his watch. It was only three o'clock. He was half an hour too soon. He laughed as he thought of this appointment. "Churches serve for everything, as far as she is concerned," said he to himself. "They console her for having married a Jew and enable her to assume an attitude of protestation in the world of politics. So much for the habit of making use of religion as an umbrella. If it is fine, it is a walking-stick; if sunny, a parasol; if it rains, a shelter; and if one does not go

out, why one leaves it in the hall. And there are hundreds like that, who care for God about as much as a cherry-stone, but who will not hear Him spoken against."

He walked slowly along the edge of the fountain, and then again looked at the church clock, which was two minutes faster than his watch.

He returned toward the door and again looked at his watch. It was still only a quarter past three. He sat down at the entrance to the main aisle, regretting that one could not smoke a cigarette.

Some one came in, and George turned sharply round. It was a poor woman in a woolen skirt, who fell on her knees close to the first chair, and remained motionless, with clasped hands, her eyes turned to heaven, her soul absorbed in prayer. Duroy watched her with interest, asking himself what grief, what pain, what despair could have crushed her heart? She was worn out by poverty, it was plain. She had perhaps, too, a husband who was beating her to death, or a dying child. He murmured, mentally: "Poor creatures. How some of them do suffer." Anger rose up in him against pitiless Nature. Then he reflected that these poor wretches believed, at any rate, that they were taken into consideration up above, and that they were duly entered in the registers of heaven with a debtor and creditor balance.

The rustle of a dress made him start. It was she.

He rose and advanced quickly. She did not hold out her hand, but murmured in a low voice: "I have only a few moments. I must get back home. Kneel down near me, so that we may not be noticed." And she advanced up the aisle, seeking a safe and suitable spot. Her face was hidden by a thick veil, and she walked with careful footsteps that could scarcely be heard.

When she reached the choir, she turned and muttered, in that mysterious tone of voice we always assume in church: "The side aisles will be better. We are too much in view here."

She bowed low to the high altar, turned to the right, and returned a little way toward the entrance; then making up her mind, she took a chair and knelt down. George took possession of the one next to her, and as soon as they were in an attitude of prayer, began: "Thanks, oh, thanks. I adore you. I should like to be always telling you so, to tell you how I began to love you, how I was captivated the first time I saw you. Will you allow me some day to open my heart to tell you all this?"

She listened to him in an attitude of deep meditation, as if she heard nothing.

He felt her shoulder trembling against him and her bosom throbbing, and she stammered abruptly: "I love you, too."

He started as though he had received a blow, and sighed, "Good God!"

She replied, in faltering tones: "Ought I to have told you that? I feel I am contemptible. I, who have two daughters; but I cannot help it, I cannot help it. I could not have believed, I should never have thought—but it is stronger than I. Listen, listen; I have never loved any one but you; I swear it. And I have loved you for a year past in secret, in my secret heart. Oh, I have suffered and struggled till I can do so no more. I love you."

She was weeping, with her hands crossed in front of her face, and her whole frame was quivering, shaken by the violence of her emotion.

He placed the hand he held upon his heart, saying: "Do you feel it beat?" For he had come to the end of his passionate phrases.

But for some moments past the regular footsteps of a promenader had been coming nearer. He had gone the round of the altars, and was now, for the second time at least, coming down the little aisle on the right.

When Madame Walter heard him close to the pillar which hid her, she snatched her fingers from George's grasp and again hid her face. And both remained motionless, kneeling as though they had been addressing fervent supplications to Heaven together.

Duroy, who was thinking of making an appointment elsewhere than at the Church of the Trinity, murmured: "Where shall I see you to-morrow?"

She did not answer. She seemed lifeless—turned into a statue of prayer. He went on: "To-morrow, will you let me meet you in the Parc Monceau?"

She turned toward him her uncovered face, a livid face, contracted by fearful suffering, and in a jerky voice ejaculated: "Leave me, leave me now; go away, go away, only for five minutes. I suffer too much beside you. I want to pray, and I cannot. Go away; let me pray alone for five minutes. I cannot. Let me implore God to pardon me—to save me. Leave me for five minutes."

Her face was so upset, so full of pain, that he rose without saying a word, and then, after a little hesitation, asked: "Shall I come back presently?"

She gave a nod, which meant "Yes, presently," and he walked away toward the choir.

She understood that it was all over, that the struggle was a useless one. She would not yield, however; and she was seized by one of those nervous crises that hurl women quivering, yelling, and writhing on the ground. She trembled in every limb, feeling that she was going to fall and roll between the

chairs, screaming. Some one approached with rapid steps. It was a priest. She rose, and rushed toward him, holding out her clasped hands, and stammering: "Oh, save me, save me!"

He halted in surprise, saying: "What is it you wish, Madame?"

"I want you to save me. Have pity on me. If you do not come to my assistance I am lost."

He looked at her, asking himself whether she was not mad, and then said: "What can I do for you?"

He was a tall and somewhat stout young man, with full pendulous cheeks, dark, with a carefully shaven face, a good-looking city curate belonging to a wealthy district, and accustomed to rich penitents.

"Hear my confession and advise me, sustain me, tell me what I am to do."

He replied: "I hear confessions every Saturday from three to six o'clock."

Having seized his arm, she gripped it tightly as she repeated: "No, no, no, at once, at once. You must. He is here, in the church. He is waiting for me."

"Who is waiting for you?" asked the priest.

"A man who will ruin me, who will carry me off if you do not save me. I cannot flee from him. I am too weak—too weak. Oh, so weak—so weak!" She fell at his feet sobbing: "Oh, have pity on me, father! Save me, in God's name, save me!"

And, fumbling in his pocket, he drew out a ring full of keys, selected one, and walked rapidly toward the little wooden cabinet. He entered the centre door, which he closed behind him, and Madame Walter, throwing herself into the narrow recess at the side, stammered fervently, with a passionate burst of hope: "Bless me, father, for I have sinned!"

Duroy, having taken a turn round the chair, passed down the left aisle.

Approaching the main entrance, he saw the poor woman still on her knees, and still praying. He thought: "By Jove! she keeps hard at it." He was no longer moved, and no longer pitied her. He passed on, began quietly to walk up the right-hand aisle to find Madame Walter again. He marked the place where he had left her from a distance, astonished at not seeing her. He thought he had made a mistake in the pillar; went on as far as the end one, and then returned. She had gone, then. He was surprised and enraged. Then he thought she might be looking for him, and made the circuit of the church again. Not finding her, he returned, and sat down on the chair she had occupied, hoping that she would rejoin him there, and waited. Soon a low murmur of voices aroused his attention. He had not seen any one in that part of the church. Whence came this whispering? He rose to see, and perceived in the adjacent chapel the doors of the confessional. The skirt of a dress issuing from one of these trailed on the pavement. He approached to examine the woman. He recognized her. She was confessing. He felt a violent inclination to take her by the shoulders and to pull her out of the box. Then he thought: "Bah! it is the priest's turn now; it will be mine to-morrow." And he sat down quietly in front of the confessional, biding his time, and chuckling now over the adventure. He waited a long time. At length, Madame Walter rose, turned round, saw him, and came up to him. Her expression was cold and severe. "Sir," said she, "I beg of you not to accompany me, not to follow me, and not to come to my house alone. You will not be received. Farewell!"

And she walked away with a dignified bearing. He let her depart, for one of his principles was never to force matters. Then, as the priest, somewhat upset, issued in turn from his box, he walked up to him and, looking him right in the eyes, growled to his face: "If you did not wear a petticoat, what a slap you would get across your ugly chops." After which he turned on his heels and went out of the church, whistling between his teeth.

The journalist, finding himself at liberty, went to the office of the *Vie Française*. As soon as he entered he saw by the busy air of the messengers that something out of the common was happening, and at once went into the manager's room. Daddy Walter, in a state of nervous excitement, was standing up dictating an article in broken sentences; issuing orders to the reporters, who surrounded him, between two paragraphs; giving instructions to Boisrenard, and opening letters.

As Duroy came in, the governor uttered a cry of joy:

"Ah! how lucky; here is Bel-Ami." He stopped short, somewhat confused, and excused himself. "I beg your pardon for speaking like that, but I am very much disturbed by certain events. And then I hear my wife and daughter speaking of you as Bel-Ami from morning till night, and have ended by falling into the habit myself. You are not offended?"

"Not at all!" said George, laughingly; "there is nothing in that nickname to displease me."

Daddy Walter went on: "Very well, then, I christen you Bel-Ami, like every one else. Well, the fact is, great things are taking place. The Ministry has been overthrown by a vote of three hundred and ten to a hundred and two. Our prorogation is again

postponed, postponed to the Greek calends, and here we ere at the twenty-eighth of July. Spain is angry about the Morocco business, and it is that which has overthrown Durand de l'Aine and his following. We are right in the swim. Marrot is intrusted with the formation of a new Cabinet. He takes General Boutin d'Acre as Minister of War, and our friend Laroche-Mathieu for foreign affairs. We are going to become an official organ. I am writing a leader, a simple declaration of our principles, pointing out the line to be followed by the Ministry." The old boy smiled, and continued: "The line they intend following, be it understood. But I want something interesting about Morocco; something up-to-date; a sensational article; something or other. Get up one for me."

Duroy reflected for a moment, and then replied: "I have the very thing for you. I will give you a study of the political situation of the whole of our African colony, with Tunis on the left, Algeria in the middle, and Morocco on the right; the history of the races inhabiting this vast extent of territory; and the narrative of an excursion on the frontier of Morocco to the great oasis of Figuig, where no European has penetrated, and which is the cause of the present conflict. Will that suit you?"

"Admirably!" exclaimed Daddy Walter. "And the title?"

"'From Tunis to Tangiers.'"

"Splendid!"

Duroy went off to search the files of the *Vie Française* for his first article, "Souvenirs d'un Chasseur d'Afrique," which, rebaptized, touched up, and modified, would do admirably, since it dealt with colonial policy, the Algerian population, and an excursion in the province of Oran. In three-

quarters of an hour it was re-written, touched up, and brought to date, with a flavor of realism, and praises of the new Cabinet. The manager, having read the article, said: "It is capital, capital, capital. You are an invaluable fellow. I congratulate you."

And Duroy went home to dinner delighted with his day's work, despite the check at the Church of the Trinity, for he felt the battle won. His wife was anxiously waiting for him. She exclaimed as soon as she saw him: "Do you know that Laroche-Mathieu is Minister for Foreign Affairs?"

"Yes; I have just written an article on Algeria in connection with it."

"What?"

"You know, the first we wrote together, 'Souvenirs d'un Chasseur d'Afrique,' revised and corrected for the occasion."

She smiled, saying: "Ah! that is very good." Then, after a few moments' reflection, she continued: "I was thinking—that continuation you were to have written then, and that you—put off. We might set to work on it now. It would make a nice series, and very appropriate to the situation."

He replied, sitting down to table: "Exactly, and there is nothing in the way of it now that sucker of a Forestier is dead."

She said quietly, in a dry and hurt tone: "That joke is more than out of place, and I beg of you to put an end to it. It has lasted too long already."

He was about to make an ironical answer, when a telegram was brought him containing these words: "I had lost my senses. Forgive me, and come at four o'clock to-morrow to the Parc Monceau."

He understood, and with heart suddenly filled with joy he said to his wife, as he slipped the mes-

sage into his pocket: "I will not do so any more, darling; it was stupid, I admit."

And he began his dinner. While eating, he kept repeating to himself the words: "I had lost my senses. Forgive me, and come at four o'clock tomorrow to the Parc Monceau." He began to laugh, and Madeleine asked: "What is it?"

"Nothing," he answered: "I was thinking of a priest I met just now, who had a very comical face."

Duroy arrived exactly on time at the appointed place next day. On the benches of the park were seated citizens overcome by heat, and careless nurses who seemed to be dreaming while their children were rolling on the gravel of the paths. He found Madame Walter in the little antique ruin in which there is a flowing spring. She was walking round the little circle of columns with an uneasy and unhappy air. As soon as he had greeted her she exclaimed: "What a number of people there are in this garden!"

He seized the opportunity: "It is true;-will you come somewhere else?"

"But where?"

"No matter where, in a cab, for instance. You can draw down the blind on your side and you will be quite invisible."

"Yes, I prefer that; here I am dying with fear."

"Well, come and meet me in five minutes at the gate opening on to the outer boulevard. I will have a cab."

And he darted off.

As soon as she had rejoined him, and had carefully drawn down the blind on her side, she asked: "Where have you told the driver to take us."

George replied: "Do not trouble yourself; he knows what to do."

He had given the man his address in the Rue de Constantinople.

She resumed: "You cannot imagine what I suffer on account of you, how I am tortured and tormented. Yesterday in the church I was cruel, but I wanted to flee from you at any cost. I was so afraid to find myself alone with you. Have you forgiven me?"

He squeezed her hands: "Yes, yes. What would I not forgive you, loving you as I do?"

She looked at him with a supplicating air: "Listen, you must promise to respect me—not to—not to—otherwise I cannot see you again."

He did not reply at once; he wore under his mustache that subtle smile that disturbed women. He ended by murmuring: "I am your slave."

Then she began to tell him how she had discovered that she was in love with him on learning that he was going to marry Madeleine Forestier. She gave details, little details of dates, etc. Suddenly she paused. The cab had stopped. Duroy opened the door.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"Get out and come into this house," he replied. "We shall be more at ease there."

CHAPTER XIII

A SECRET OF DIPLOMACY

AUTUMN had come. The Duroys had passed the whole of the summer in Paris carrying on a vigorous campaign in the *Vie Française* during the short vacation of the deputies.

The journal had gained considerably in importance through its known connection with the party in office. It published political intelligence in advance of the most important papers, and hinted discreetly the intentions of its friends the Ministry, so that all the papers of Paris and the provinces took their views from it. It was quoted and feared, and people began to respect it.

Madeleine's drawing-room had been an influential centre, in which several members of the Cabinet

met every week. The President of the Council had even dined twice at her house, and the wives of statesmen who had formerly hesitated to cross her threshold now boasted of being her friends, and paid her more visits than were returned by her. The Minister for Foreign Affairs reigned almost as a master in the household. He called at all hours, bringing despatches, news, items of information, which he dictated either to the husband or the wife, as if they had been his secretaries.

When Duroy, after the minister's departure, found himself alone with Madeleine, he would break out in a menacing tone and with bitter insinuations against the goings-on of this commonplace parvenu.

But she would shrug her shoulders contemptuously, repeating: "Do as much as he has done yourself. Become a minister, and you can have your own way. Till then, hold your tongue."

He growled: "He worries me to death, that minister of yours. He is a nincompoop."

She remarked, quietly. "He is no more my minister than he is yours. He is more useful to you than to me."

He turned half round toward her, saying sneeringly: "I beg your pardon, but he does not pay court to me."

She observed, slowly: "Nor to me either; but he is making our fortune."

He was silent for a few moments, and then resumed: "If I had to make a choice among your admirers, I should still prefer that old fossil De Vaudrec. What has become of him? I have not seen him for a week."

"He is indisposed," replied she, unmovedly. "He wrote to me that he was even obliged to keep his bed from an attack of gout. You ought to call

and ask how he is. You know he likes you very well, and it would please him."

George said: "Yes, certainly, I will go some time to-day."

And he went out. Monsieur Laroche-Mathieu was awaiting him, for he was lunching at ten o'clock that morning, the Council having to meet at noon, before the opening of Parliament. As soon as they were seated at table alone with the minister's private secretary, for Madame Laroche-Mathieu had been unwilling to change her own meal times, Durcy spoke of his article, sketched out the line he proposed to take, consulting notes scribbled on visiting cards, and when he had finished said: "Is there anything you think should be modified, my dear minister?"

"Very little, my dear fellow. You are, perhaps, a trifle too strongly affirmative as regards the Morocco business. Speak of the expedition as if it were going to take place; but, at the same time, letting it be understood that it will not take place, and that you do not believe in it the least in the world. Write in such a way that the public can easily read between the lines that we are not going to poke our noses into that adventure."

"Quite so. I understand, and I will make myself thoroughly understood. My wife commissioned me to ask you, on this point, whether General Bellonde will be sent to Oran. After what you have said, I conclude he will not."

The statesman answered: "No."

Then they spoke of the coming session. Laroche-Mathieu began to spout, rehearsing the phrases that he was about to pour forth on his colleagues a few hours later. A tiny, twisted mustache curled up its two ends above his lip, like scorpions' tails, and

his hair, anointed with brilliantine and parted in the middle, was puffed out over his temples, after the fashion of a provincial lady-killer.

The private secretary ate and drank quietly, no doubt accustomed to these floods of loquacity; but Duroy, whom jealousy of achieved success cut to the quick, thought: "Go on, you proser. What idiots these political jokers are!" And comparing his own worth to the frothy importance of the minister, he said to himself: "By Jove! if I had only a clear hundred thousand francs to offer myself as a candidate at home, near Rouen, and dish my cunning dullards of Normandy folk in their own sauce, what a statesman I should make beside these short-sighted rascals!"

Presently Laroche-Mathieu rang for his brougham, and, holding out his hand to the journalist, said: "You quite understand, my dear fellow?"

"Perfectly, my dear minister; you may rely upon me."

And Duroy strolled leisurely to the office to begin his article, for he had nothing to do till four o'clock. But, on reaching the office, a telegram was handed to him. It was from Madame Walter, and ran as follows:

"I must see you to-day. Most important. Expect me two o'clock, Rue de Constantinople. Can render you great service. Till death VIRGINIE."

He began to swear: "Hang it all, what an infernal bore!" And seized with a fit of ill-temper, he went out again at once, too irritated to work.

From the first he had been trying to break off with her, without being able to wear out her eager attachment. He had found that he did not relish this mature and melodramatic conquest, and had

simply kept away, hoping to put an end to the adventure in that way. She insisted on seeing him, however, summoning him at all hours to a hasty meeting at a street corner, at a shop, or in a public garden. She would then repeat to him in a few words, always the same, that she worshiped and idolized him, and leave him, vowing that she felt so happy to have seen him. He had to call at the Walters' home, but found more pleasure in playing with Susan, who amused him by her whimsicalities. In her doll-like frame was lodged an active, arch, sly, and startling wit, always ready to show itself off. She joked at everything and everybody with biting readiness. George stimulated her imagination, excited it to irony, and they understood one another marvelously. She kept appealing to him every moment: "I say, Bel-Ami. Come here, Bel-Ami."

He would at once leave the mother and go to the daughter, who would whisper some bit of spitefulness, at which they would laugh heartily.

Although disgusted with Madame Walter, he observed some circumspection on account of the *Vie Française,* and strove by dint of coolness, harshness, tempered by attention, and even rude words at times, to make her understand that there must be an end to it.

His affection for Madame de Marelle had, on the contrary, augmented during the summer. He called her his "little rascal," and she certainly charmed him. Their two natures had kindred links; they were both members of the adventurous race of vagabonds, those vagabonds in society who so strongly resemble, without being aware of it, the vagabonds of the highways.

He had fancied himself at length pretty well rid of Madame Walter, when he received at the office of

the paper the telegram summoning him to meet her at two o'clock.

He thought: "What does this old screech-owl want with me now? I wager she has nothing to tell me. She will only repeat that she adores me. Yet I must see what it means. She speaks of an important affair, and a great service; perhaps it is so."

He walked slowly, dreading the meeting with Madame Walter. "Ah! I will just receive her nicely if she has nothing to tell me! Cambronne's language will be academic compared to mine. I will tell her that I will never set foot in her house again, to begin with."

He went in, and as soon as she caught sight of him she exclaimed: "Ah! you got my telegram. How fortunate!"

He put on a grumpy expression, saying: "By Jove, yes; I found it at the office just as I was going to start off to the Chamber. What is it you want now?"

She had raised her veil, and drew near with the timid and submissive air of an oft-beaten dog.

"How cruel you are to me! How harshly you speak to me! What have I done to you? You cannot imagine how I suffer through you. Do you remember what you said to me in the church? And now, how do you speak to me? How do you receive me? Oh, God, oh, God, what pain you give me!"

He stamped his foot, and exclaimed violently: "Ah, bosh! That's enough of it. I can't see you a moment without hearing all that foolery."

She had taken a step forward in order to bar the way, and quickly pulling out a handkerchief from her pocket, wiped her eyes with an abrupt movement. Her voice grew firmer by the effect of her will as she said, in tones tremulous with pain: "No

—I came to—to tell you some news—political news —to put you in the way of gaining fifty thousand francs—or even more—if you like."

He inquired, suddenly softened: "How so? What do you mean? "

"They are going to take possession of Morocco, but do not wish to let you know of it."

"Sit down," said George, and sat down himself in an armchair. Then she drew toward him a low stool, and sitting down on it between his knees, went on in a coaxing tone: "As I am always thinking about you, I pay attention now to everything that is whispered around me."

And she began quietly to explain to him how she had guessed for some time past that something was being hatched unknown to him; that they were making use of him, while dreading his coöperation.

At length, the day before, she had understood it all. It was a business transaction, a tremendous affair, hatched on the quiet. She smiled now, happy in her dexterity, and grew excited, speaking like a financier's wife accustomed to see the market manipulated, to see stocks rise and fall, ruining within two hours thousands of small investors who had placed their savings in undertakings guaranteed by the names of men honored and respected in the world of politics or finance.

She repeated: "Oh, it is a big thing that they have done. Very big. It was Walter who did it all, though, and he knows all about such things. Really it is a first-class job."

He grew impatient at these preliminaries, and exclaimed: "Come, tell me what it is at once."

"Well, then, this is what it is. The Tangiers expedition was decided upon between them on the

day that Laroche-Mathieu took the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, little by little, they have bought up the whole of the Morocco loan, which had fallen to sixty-four or sixty-five francs. They bought it up very cleverly by means of shady brokers, who did not awaken any mistrust. They have even hoodwinked the Rothschilds, who were astonished to find Morocco stock always in demand, and who were answered by having agents pointed out to them—all stool pigeons. That quieted the big financiers. And now the expedition is to take place, and as soon as we are there, the French Government will guarantee the debt. Our friends will gain fifty or sixty millions. You understand the matter? You understand, too, how afraid they have been of every one, of the slightest indiscretion? ''

She had leaned her head against the young fellow's waistcoat, and with her arms resting on his legs, pressed up against him, feeling that she was interesting him now, and ready to do anything for a caress, for a smile.

'' You are quite certain? '' he asked.

'' I should think so,'' she replied with confidence.

'' It is very smart, indeed. As to that swine of a Laroche-Mathieu, just see if I don't pay him out one of these days. Oh, the scoundrel! Just let him look out for himself. He shall go through my hands.''

Then he began to reflect, and went on: '' We ought, though, to profit by all this.''

'' You can still buy some of the loan,'' said she; '' it is only at seventy-two francs.''

He said: '' Yes, but I have no money under my hand.''

She raised her eyes toward him, eyes full of entreaty, saying: '' I have thought of that, and if you were very nice, you would let me lend you some.''

He answered abruptly and almost harshly: "As to that, no, indeed."

She murmured in an imploring voice: "Listen, there is something that you can do without borrowing money. I wanted to buy ten thousand francs' worth of the stock to make a little nest-egg. Well, I will take twenty thousand, and you shall stand in for half. You understand that I am not going to hand the money over to Walter. So there is nothing to pay for the present. If it succeeds, you gain seventy thousand francs. If not, you will owe me ten thousand, which you can pay when you please."

He remarked: "No, I do not like such partnerships."

Then she argued, in order to get him to make up his mind. She proved to him that he was really pledging his word for ten thousand francs, that he was running risks, and that she was not advancing him anything, since the actual outlay was made by Walter's bank. She pointed out to him, besides, that it was he who had carried on in the *Vie Française* the whole of the political campaign that had rendered the scheme possible. He would be very foolish not to profit by it. He still hesitated, and she added: "But you reflect that in reality it is Walter who is advancing you these ten thousand francs, and that you have rendered him services worth a great deal more than that."

"Very well, then," said he, "I will go halves with you. If we lose, I will repay you the ten thousand francs."

She was so pleased that she took both his hands, and began to kiss them eagerly. He repulsed her gently, saying. "Come, be good now."

She looked at him disconsolately, saying: "Oh, George, can't I even kiss your hands?"

He replied: "No, not to-day. I have a headache, and it upsets me."

She sat down again and asked: "Will you come and dine with us to-morrow? It would give me such pleasure."

He hesitated, but dared not refuse, so said: "Certainly."

As he was leaving she stood very close to him, and one of her long black hairs caught in his waistcoat. She noticed it, and a wild idea crossed her mind, one of those superstitious notions which are often the whole of a woman's reason. She began to twist this hair gently round a button. Then she fastened another hair to the next button, and a third to the next. One to every button. He would tear them out of her head presently when he turned to go, and hurt her. What happiness! And he would carry away something of her without knowing it, he would carry away a tiny lock of her hair which he had never yet asked for. It was a tie by which she attached him to her, a secret, invisible bond, a talisman she left with him.

He said, all at once: "I must leave you, because I am expected at the Chamber at the close of the sitting. I cannot miss attending to-day."

She sighed, "Already," and then added, resignedly: "Go, dear, but you will come to dinner tomorrow." And suddenly she drew aside. There was a short and sharp pain in her head, as though needles had been stuck into the skin. Her heart throbbed, she was pleased to have suffered a little by him. "Good-by," said she.

After considerable reflection, Duroy called a messenger and sent the following note to Madame de Marelle: "I am going to intrust you with a commission for your husband. Tell him from me to buy

to-morrow ten thousand francs' worth of the Morocco loan, which is quoted at seventy-two, and I promise him that he will gain from sixty to eighty thousand francs before three months are over. Charge him to observe the most absolute secrecy. Tell him from me that the expedition to Tangiers is decided on, and that the French Government will guarantee the Morocco loan. But do not mention it to a soul. It is a State secret that I am intrusting to you."

* * * * * * *

He walked down as far as the boulevard, and sauntering along stopped in front of a jeweler's shop to look at a chronometer which he had fancied for a long time back, and which was ticketed eighteen hundred francs. He thought all at once, with a thrill of joy at his heart: "If I gain my seventy thousand francs, I can afford it." And he began to think of all the things he would do with these seventy thousand francs. In the first place, he would get elected deputy. Then he would buy his chronometer, and would speculate on the Bourse, and would——

He did not want to go to the office, preferring to consult Madeleine before seeing Walter and writing his article, and started for home. He had reached the Rue Drouot, when he stopped short. He had forgotten to ask after the Comte de Vaudrec, who lived in the Chaussée d'Antin. He therefore turned back, still sauntering; thinking of a thousand things, mainly pleasant, of his coming fortune.

He asked the concierge of the house in which the Comte de Vaudrec resided: "How is Monsieur de Vaudrec? I hear that he has been indisposed the last few days."

The man replied: "The Count is very bad indeed, sir. They are afraid he will not live through the night; the gout has gone to his heart."

Duroy was so startled that he no longer knew what he ought to do. Vaudrec dying! Confused and disquieting ideas shot through his mind that he dared not even admit to himself. He stammered: "Thank you; I will call again," without knowing what he was saying. Then he jumped into a cab and was driven home. His wife had come in. He went into her room, breathless, and said at once: "Have you heard? Vaudrec is dying."

She was sitting down reading a letter. She raised her eyes and repeated thrice: "Oh, what do you say, what do you say, what do you say?"

"I say that Vaudrec is dying from an attack of gout that has gone to the heart." Then he added: "What do you think of doing?"

She had risen, her face livid and her cheeks shaken by a nervous quivering, then she began to cry terribly, hiding her face in her hands. She stood shaken by sobs and torn with grief. But suddenly she mastered her sorrow, and wiping her eyes, said: "I—I am going there—don't bother about me—I don't know when I shall be back—don't wait for me."

He replied: "Very well, dear." They shook hands, and she went off so hurriedly that she forgot her gloves.

George, having dined alone, began to write his article. He did so exactly in accordance with the minister's instructions, giving his readers to understand that the expedition to Morocco would not take place. Then he took it to the office, chatted for a few minutes with the governor, and went out smoking, light-hearted, though he knew not why. His

wife had not come home, and he went to bed and fell asleep.

Madeleine came in toward midnight. George, suddenly aroused, sat up in bed. "Well?" he asked.

He had never seen her so pale and so deeply moved. She murmured: "He is dead."

"Ah—and he did not say anything?"

"Nothing. He had lost consciousness when I arrived."

George was thinking. Questions rose to his lips that he did not dare to put. "Come to bed," said he.

She undressed rapidly and slipped into bed beside him, when he resumed: "Were there any relations present at his death-bed?"

"Only a nephew."

"Ah! Did he see this nephew often?"

"Never. They had not met for ten years."

"Had he any other relatives?"

"No, I do not think so."

"Then it is this nephew who will inherit?"

"I do not know."

"He was very well off, Vaudrec?"

"Yes, very well off."

"Do you know what his fortune was?"

"No, not exactly. One or two millions, perhaps."

He said no more. She blew out the light, and they remained, side by side, in the darkness—silent, wakeful, and reflecting. He no longer felt inclined for sleep. He now thought the seventy thousand francs promised by Madame Walter insignificant. Suddenly he fancied that Madeleine was crying. He inquired, in order to make certain: "Are you asleep?"

"No."

Her voice was tearful and quavering, and he said: "I forgot to tell you when I came in that your minister has played us a nice trick."

"How so?"

He told her at length, with all details, the scheme hatched between Laroche-Mathieu and Walter. When he had finished she asked: "How do you know this?"

He replied: "You will excuse me not telling you. You have your means of information, which I do not seek to penetrate. I have mine, which I wish to keep to myself. I can, in any case, answer for the correctness of my information."

Then she murmured: "Yes, it is quite possible. I fancied they were up to something without us."

But George, who no longer felt sleepy, had drawn closer to his wife, and gently kissed her ear. She repulsed him sharply: "I beg of you to leave me alone. I am not in a mood for fooling." He turned resignedly toward the wall, and, having closed his eyes, ended by falling asleep.

CHAPTER XIV

A TESTIMONY OF REGARD

THE church was draped with black, and over the main entrance a huge coat-of-arms, surmounted by a coronet, announced to the passers-by that a nobleman was being buried. The ceremony was just over, and those present at it were slowly dispersing, defiling past the coffin and the nephew of the Comte de Vaudrec, who was now shaking hands and returning bows. When George Duroy and his wife came out of the church they began to walk homeward side by side, silent and preoccupied. At length George said, as though speaking to himself: "Really, it is very strange."

"What, dear?" asked Madeleine.

"That Vaudrec should not have left us anything."

She blushed suddenly, as though a rosy veil had been cast over her white skin, and said: "Why should he leave us anything? There was no reason

why he should do so." Then, after a few moments' silence, she went on: "There is, perhaps, a will in the hands of some notary. We know nothing as yet."

He reflected for a short time, and then murmured: "Yes, it is probable, for, after all, he was the most intimate friend of both of us. He dined with us twice a week, called at all hours, and was at home at our place, quite at home in every respect. He loved you like a father, and had no children, no brothers and sisters, nothing but a nephew, and a nephew he never used to see. Yes, there must be a will. I do not care for much, only a remembrance to show that he thought of us, that he loved us, that he recognized the affection that we felt for him. He certainly owed us some such mark of friendship."

She said in a pensive and indifferent manner: "It is possible, indeed, that there may be a will."

As they entered their rooms, the man-servant handed a letter to Madeleine. She opened it, and then held it out to her husband. It ran as follows:

"Office of Maître Lamaneur, Notary,
"17 Rue des Vosges.

"MADAME: I have the honor to beg you to call at my office on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, between the hours of two and four, on business that concerns you. I am, etc., LAMANEUR."

George had reddened in turn. "That is what it must be," said he. "It is strange, though, that it is you who are summoned, and not myself, who am legally the head of the family."

She did not answer at once, but after a brief period of reflection said: "Shall we go round there by and by?"

"Yes, certainly."

They set out as soon as they had lunched. When they entered Maître Lamaneur's office, the head clerk rose with marked attention and ushered them into the lawyer's private office. The notary was a round little man, round all over. His head looked like a ball almost nailed on to another ball, resting on short little legs that almost resembled balls, too. He bowed, pointed to two chairs, and, turning toward Madeleine, said:

"Madame, I have sent for you in order to acquaint you with the will of the Comte de Vaudrec, in which you are interested."

George could not help muttering: "I thought so."

The notary went on: "I will read to you the document, which is very brief."

He took a paper from a box in front of him, and read as follows:

"I, the undersigned, Paul Emile Cyprien Gontran, Comte de Vaudrec, being sound in body and mind, hereby express my last wishes. As death may overtake us at any moment, I wish in provision of his attacks to take the precaution of making my will, which will be placed in the hands of Maître Lamaneur. Having no direct heirs, I leave the whole of my fortune, consisting of stocks to the amount of six hundred thousand francs and landed property worth about five hundred thousand francs, to Madame Claire Madeleine Duroy, without any charge or condition. I beg her to accept this gift of a departed friend as the proof of a deep, devoted, and respectful affection."

The notary added: "That is all. This document is dated last August, and replaces one of the same nature, written two years back, with the name of Madame Claire Madeleine Forestier. I have this

first will, too, which would prove, in the case of opposition on the part of the family, that the Comte de Vaudrec did not change his mind."

Madeleine, very pale, looked at her feet. George nervously twisted the end of his mustache between his fingers. The notary continued, after a moment of silence: "It is of course understood, sir, that your wife cannot accept the legacy without your consent."

Duroy rose and said dryly: "I must ask time to reflect."

The notary, who was smiling, bowed, and said in an amiable tone: "I understand the scruples that cause you to hesitate, sir. I should say that the nephew of Monsieur de Vaudrec, who became acquainted this very morning with his uncle's last wishes, stated that he was prepared to respect them, provided the sum of a hundred thousand francs was allowed him. In my opinion the will is unassailable, but a law suit would cause a stir which it may perhaps suit you to avoid. The world often judges things ill-naturedly. In any case, can you give me your answer on all these points before Saturday?"

George bowed, saying: "Yes, sir."

Then he bowed again ceremoniously, ushered out his wife, who had remained silent, and went out himself with so stiff an air that the notary no longer smiled.

As soon as they got home, Duroy abruptly closed the door, and, throwing his hat on the bed, said:

"You were more than a mere friend to Vaudrec."

Madeleine, who was taking off her veil, turned round with a start, exclaiming: "I? Oh!"

" Yes, you. A man does not leave the whole of his fortune to a woman, unless——"

She was trembling, and was unable to remove the pins fastening the transparent tissue. After a moment's reflection she stammered, in an agitated tone: " Come, come—you are mad—you are—you are. Did not you yourself, just now, have hopes that he would leave us something? "

George remained standing beside her, following all her emotions like a magistrate seeking to note the least hesitation on the part of an accused. He said, laying stress on every word: " Yes, he might have left something to me, your husband—to me, his friend—you understand, but not to you—my wife. The distinction is capital, essential from the point of propriety and of public opinion."

Madeleine in turn looked at him fixedly in the eyes, in a penetrating and singular fashion, as though seeking to read something there, as though trying to discover that unknown part of a human being which we never fathom, and of which we can scarcely even catch rapid glimpses at moments which are like doors left half open, revealing the mysterious depths of the mind. She said slowly: " It seems to me, however, that a legacy of this importance would have been looked on as at least equally strange left to you."

He asked abruptly: " Why so? "

She said: " Because——" hesitated, and then continued. " Because you are my husband, and have only known him for a short time, after all—because I have been his friend for a very long while—and because his first will, made during Forestier's lifetime, was already in my favor."

George began to stride up and down. He said: " You cannot accept."

She replied in a tone of indifference: "Precisely so. Then it is not worth while waiting till Saturday; we can let Maître Lamaneur know at once."

He stopped short in front of her, and they again stood for some moments with their eyes riveted on each other, striving to fathom the impenetrable secret of their hearts, to cut down to the quick of their thoughts.

They tried to see one another's conscience unveiled in an ardent and mute interrogation; the struggle of two beings who, living side by side, were always ignorant of one another, suspecting, sniffing round, watching, but never understanding one another to the muddy depths of their souls. And suddenly he muttered to her face, in a low voice: "Come, tell me the whole story of your friendship with De Vaudrec."

She shrugged her shoulders, saying: "Vaudrec was very fond of me, very—but there was nothing more—never."

He stamped his foot. "You lie. It is not possible."

She replied quietly: "It is so, though."

He began to walk up and down again, and then, halting once more, said: "Explain, then, how he came to leave the whole of his fortune to you."

She did so in a careless and disinterested tone, saying: "It is quite simple. As you said just now, he had only ourselves for friends, or rather myself, for he has known me from a child. My mother was a companion at the house of some relatives of his. He was always coming here, and as he had no natural heirs, he thought of me. That there was a little love for me in the matter is possible. But where is the woman who has not been loved thus? Why

should not such secret, hidden affection have placed my name at the tip of his pen when he thought of expressing his last wishes? He brought me flowers every Monday. You were not at all astonished at that, and yet he did not bring you any, did he? Now he has given me his fortune for the same reason, and because he had no one to offer it to. It would have been, on the contrary, very surprising for him to have left it to you. Why should he have done so? What were you to him? "

She spoke so naturally and quietly that George hesitated. He said, however: " All the same, we cannot accept this inheritance under such conditions. The effect would be deplorable. All the world would believe it, all the world would gossip about it and laugh at me. My fellow journalists are already only too disposed to feel jealous of me and to attack me. I should have, before any one, a care for my honor and my reputation. It is impossible for me to allow my wife to accept a legacy of this kind. Forestier might perhaps have tolerated it, but not I."

She murmured mildly: " Well, dear, do not let us accept. It will be a million the less in our pockets, that is all."

He was still walking up and down, and began to think aloud, speaking for his wife's benefit, without addressing himself directly to her: " Yes, a million; so much the worse. He did not understand, in making his will, what a fault in tact, what a breach of propriety he was committing. He did not see in what a false, a ridiculous position he would place me. Everything is a matter of detail in this life. He should have left me half, that would have settled everything."

He sat down, crossed his legs, and began to twist

the end of his mustache, as he did in moments of boredom, uneasiness, and difficult reflection. Madeleine took up some embroidery at which she worked from time to time, and said, while selecting her wools: "I have only to hold my tongue. It is for you to reflect."

He was a long time without replying, and then said hesitatingly: "The world will never understand that Vaudrec made you his sole heiress, and that I allowed it. Do you understand now how our acceptance of it would be interpreted? It would be necessary to find a side issue, some clever way of palliating matters. To let it go abroad, for instance, that he had divided the money between us, leaving half to the husband and half to the wife."

She observed: "I do not see how that can be done, since the will is plain."

"Oh! it is very simple. You could leave me half the inheritance by a deed of gift. We have no children, so it is feasible. In that way the mouth of public malevolence would be closed."

She replied somewhat impatiently: "I do not see any the more how the mouth of public malevolence is to be closed, since the will is there, signed by Vaudrec."

He said angrily: "Have we any need to show it and to paste it up on the walls? You are really stupid. We will say that the Comte de Vaudrec left his fortune between us. That is all. But you cannot accept this legacy without my authorization. I will only give it on condition of a division, which will hinder me from becoming a laughing-stock."

She looked at him again with a penetrating glance, and said: "As you like. I am willing."

Then he rose and began to walk up and down again. He seemed to be hesitating anew, and now

avoided his wife's penetrating glance. He was saying: "No; certainly not. Perhaps it would be better to give it up altogether. That is more worthy, more correct, more honorable. And yet by this plan nothing could be imagined against us—absolutely nothing. The most scrupulous people could have nothing to say." He paused in front of Madeleine. "Well, then, if you like, darling, I will go back alone to Maître Lamaneur to explain matters to him and consult him. I will tell him of my scruples, and add that we have decided on dividing the fortune to prevent gossip. From the moment that I accept half this inheritance, it is plain that no one has the right to smile. It is equal to saying aloud: 'My wife accepts because I accept, I, her husband, the best judge of what she may do without compromising herself.' Otherwise a scandal would have arisen."

Madeleine merely murmured: "Just as you like."

He went on with a flow of words: "Yes, it is all as clear as daylight with this arrangement of dividing it in halves. We inherit from a friend who did not want to make any difference between us—any distinction; who did not wish to appear to say: 'I preferred one or the other after death, as I did during life.' He liked the wife best, be it understood, but in leaving the fortune to both, he wished plainly to express that his preference was purely platonic. And you may be sure that, if he had thought of it, that is what he would have done. He did not reflect. He did not foresee the consequences. As you said very appropriately just now, it was you to whom he offered flowers every week; it is to you that he wished to leave his last remembrance, without taking into consideration that——"

She checked him with a shade of irritation: "All right; I understand. You have no need to make so many explanations. Go to the notary's at once."

He stammered, reddening: "You are right. I am off."

He took his hat, and then, at the moment of going out, said: "I will try to settle the difficulty with the nephew for fifty thousand francs, eh?"

She replied, with dignity: "No. Give him the hundred thousand francs he asks. Take them from my share if you like."

He muttered, shamefacedly: "Oh, no; we will share that. Giving up fifty thousand francs apiece, there still remains to us a clear million." He added: "Good-by, then, for the present, Maisie." And he went off to explain to the notary the partnership, which he asserted had been thought out by his wife.

They signed the next day a deed of gift of five hundred thousand francs, which Madeleine Duroy abandoned to her husband. On leaving the notary's office, as the day was fine, George suggested that they should walk as far as the boulevards. He showed himself pleasant, and full of attention and affection. He laughed, pleased at everything, while she remained thoughtful and somewhat severe.

It was a somewhat cool autumn day. The people in the streets seemed in a hurry, and walked rapidly. Duroy led his wife to the front of the shop in which he had so often gazed at the longed-for chronometer. "Shall I buy you some jewelry?" said he.

She replied indifferently: "Just as you like."

They went in, and he asked: "What would you

prefer—a necklace, a bracelet, or a pair of earrings? "

The sight of the trinkets in gold and precious stones overcame her studied coolness, and she scanned with kindling and inquisitive eyes the glass cases filled with jewelry. And, suddenly moved by desire, she said: " That is a very pretty bracelet."

It was a chain of quaint pattern, every link of which had a different stone set in it.

George inquired: " How much is this bracelet? "

" Three thousand francs, sir," replied the jeweler.

" If you will let me have it for two thousand five hundred it is a bargain."

The man hesitated, and then replied: " No, sir, that is impossible."

Duroy went on: " Come, you can throw in that chronometer for fifteen hundred; that will make four thousand, which I will pay at once. Is it agreed? If not, I will go somewhere else."

The jeweler, in a state of perplexity, ended by agreement, saying: " Very good, sir."

And the journalist, after giving his address, added:

" You will have the monogram, G. R. C., engraved on the chronometer under a baron's coronet."

Madeleine, surprised, began to smile, and when they went out took his arm with a certain affection. She found him really clever and capable. Now that he had an income, he needed a title. It was quite right.

The jeweler bowed them out, saying: " You can depend upon me; it will be ready on Thursday, Baron."

They paused before the Vaudeville, at which a new piece was being played.

"If you like," said he, "we will go to the theatre this evening. Let us see if we can get a box."

They took a box, and he continued: "Suppose we dine at a restaurant."

"Oh! yes, I should like that."

He was happy as a king, and sought what else they could do. "Suppose we go and ask Madame de Marelle to spend the evening with us. Her husband is at home, I hear, and I shall be delighted to see him."

They went there. George, who slightly dreaded the meeting, was not ill pleased that his wife was present to prevent anything like an explanation. But Clotilde did not seem to remember anything against him, and even obliged her husband to accept the invitation.

The dinner was good and the evening pleasant. George and Madeleine got home late. The gas was out, and to light them upstairs the journalist struck a wax match from time to time. On reaching the first floor landing, the flame, suddenly starting forth as he struck, caused their two lit-up faces to show in the glass standing out against the darkness of the staircase. They resembled phantoms, appearing suddenly and ready to vanish into the night.

Duroy raised his hand to light up their reflections, and said, with a laugh of triumph: "Behold the millionaires!"

CHAPTER XV

LITTLE SUSAN COMES FORWARD

THE conquest of Morocco had been accomplished two months back. France, mistress of Tangiers, held the whole of the African shore of the Mediterranean as far as Tripoli, and had guaranteed the debt of the newly annexed territory. It was said that two ministers had gained a score of millions over the business, and Laroche-Mathieu was almost openly named. As to Walter, no one in Paris was ignorant of the fact that he had brought down two birds with one stone, and made thirty or forty millions out of the loan and eight to ten millions out of the copper and iron mines, as well as out of a large stretch of territory bought for almost nothing prior to the conquest, and sold after the French occupation to companies formed to promote colonization. He had become in a few days one of the lords of creation, one of those omnipo-

tent financiers more powerful than monarchs, who cause heads to bow, mouths to stammer, and all that is base, cowardly, and envious to well up from the depths of the human heart. He was no longer the Jew Walter. He was Monsieur Walter, the wealthy Israelite.

He wished to let it be known. Aware of the monetary embarrassments of the Prince de Carlsbourg, who owned one of the finest mansions in the Rue de Faubourg Saint Honoré, with a garden opening on the Champs Elysées, he proposed to him to buy his house and furniture, just as it stood, within twenty-four hours. He offered three millions, and the Prince, tempted by the amount, accepted. The following day, Walter installed himself in his new domicile. Then he had another idea, the idea of a conqueror who wishes to conquer Paris, the idea of a Bonaparte. The whole city was flocking at that moment to see a great painting by the Hungarian artist, Karl Marcowitch, exhibited at a dealer's named Jacques Lenoble, and representing Christ walking on the water. The art critics, filled with enthusiasm, declared this picture the most superb masterpiece of the century. Walter bought it for four hundred thousand francs, and took it away, thus cutting suddenly short the flow of public curiosity, and forcing the whole of Paris to speak of him in terms of envy, blame, or approbation. Then he had it announced in the newspapers that he would invite every one known in Parisian society to view at his house some evening this triumph of the foreign master, in order that it might not be said that he had hidden away a work of art. His house would be open, let those who would come. It would be enough to show at the door the letter of invitation.

This ran as follows: "Monsieur and Madame Walter beg of you to honor them with your company on December 30, between nine and twelve P. M., to view the picture by Karl Marcowitch, 'Jesus Walking on the Waters,' illuminated by electric light." Then, as a postcript, in small letters: "Dancing after midnight." So those who wished to stay might do so, and out of these the Walters would recruit their future acquaintances. The others would view the picture, the mansion, and their owners with worldly curiosity, insolent and indifferent, and would then go away as they came. But Daddy Walter knew very well that they would return later on, as they had done in the case of his Israelite brethren, grown rich like himself. The main thing was that they should enter his house, all these titled paupers who were mentioned in the papers, and they would enter it to see the face of a man who had gained fifty millions in six weeks; they would enter it to see and note who else came there; they would also enter it because he had had the good taste and dexterity to summon them to admire a Christian picture at the home of a child of Israel.

Duroy was furious at his chief's triumph. He had thought himself rich with the half million francs extorted from his wife, and now he considered himself to be poor, fearfully poor, when comparing his modest fortune with the shower of millions that had fallen around him, without his being able to pick any of it up. He was angry with every one; with his wife, who, deceived by Laroche-Mathieu, had persuaded him not to invest in the Morocco loan; and, above all, with the minister who had tricked him, who had made use of him, and who dined at his table twice a week. Laroche-Mathieu

now reigned in the Duroy household, having taken the place and the days of the Comte de Vaudrec, and spoke to the servants like a second master. George tolerated him with a quiver running through him like a dog who wants to bite and dares not.

He had declared at first that he would not go to his chief's entertainment, and that he would never more set foot in his house. For two months Madame Walter had been writing letters, begging him to come, whenever he liked, in order, she said, that she might hand over the seventy thousand francs she had gained for him. He did not reply, and threw these into the fire. Not that he had renounced receiving his share of their profits, but he wanted to madden her, to treat her with contempt. She was too rich. He wanted to show his pride. The very day of the exhibition of the picture, as Madeleine pointed out to him that he was very wrong not to go, he replied: "Leave me in peace. I shall stay at home."

Then, after dinner, he suddenly said: "It will be better, after all, to undergo this infliction. Get dressed at once."

She was expecting this, and said: "I will be ready in a quarter of an hour."

He dressed growling, and even in the cab he continued to vent his anger.

The courtyard of the Carlsbourg mansion was illuminated by four electric lights, looking like four small bluish moons, one at each corner. A splendid carpet was laid down the high flight of steps, on each of which a footman in livery stood motionless as a statue.

Duroy muttered: "Here is a fine splurge for you," and shrugged his shoulders, his heart filled with jealousy.

His wife said: "Keep still, and do as much yourself!"

They went in and handed their wraps to the footmen, who advanced to meet them.

The reception rooms were already crowded. Most of the ladies were in outdoor dress to show that they came there as to any other exhibition. Those who intended remaining for the ball were armed and bare-necked. Madame Walter, surrounded by her friends, was in the second room, acknowledging the greetings of the visitors. Many of these did not know her, and walked about as though in a museum, without troubling themselves about the masters of the house. When she perceived Duroy she remained motionless awaiting Duroy. He greeted her ceremoniously, while Madeleine overwhelmed her with affection and compliments. Then George left his wife with her and lost himself in the crowd, to listen to the spiteful things that assuredly must be said.

George recognized some well-known people—the Duchess de Ferracine, the Count and Countess de Ravenel, General Prince d'Andremont, the beautiful Marchioness des Dunes, and all those folk who are seen at first performances. He was suddenly seized by the arm, and a young and pleased voice murmured in his ear: "Ah! here you are at last, you naughty Bel-Ami. How is it one no longer sees you?"

It was Susan Walter, scanning him with her enamel-like eyes from beneath the curly cloud of her fair hair. He was delighted to see her again, and frankly pressed her hand. Then, excusing himself, he said: "I have not been able to come. I have had so much to do during the past two months that I have not been out at all."

She said, with a serious air: "That is wrong, very wrong. You have caused us a great deal of sorrow, for we adore you, mamma and I. As to myself, I cannot get on without you. When you are not here I am bored to death. You see I tell you so plainly, so that you may no longer have the right to disappear like that. Give me your arm, I will show you 'Jesus Walking on the Waters' myself; it is right at the end, beyond the conservatory. Papa had it put there so that they should be obliged to see everything before they could get to it. It is astonishing how proud papa is of this place."

They went on quietly among the crowd. People turned round to look at this good-looking fellow and this charming little doll. A well-known painter said:

"What a pretty pair! They go capitally together."

George was thinking: "If I had been really clever, this is the girl I should have married. I could have done it. How is it I did not think of it? How did I come to take that other one? What a piece of stupidity! We always act too impetuously, and never reflect sufficiently."

Susan was saying: "Oh! do come often, Bel-Ami; we will go in for all sorts of extravagances, now papa is so rich. We will amuse ourselves like madcaps."

He answered, still following up his idea: "Oh! you will marry now. I will not give you six months before you are caught with that same bait. You will be a marchioness, a duchess, or a princess, and will look down on me from a very great height, miss."

She grew indignant, tapped him on the arm with

her fan, and vowed that she would marry according to the dictates of her heart.

He sneered: "We shall see about that; you are too rich."

She remarked, "But you, too, have come in for an inheritance."

He uttered in a tone of contempt: "Oh! not worth speaking about. Scarcely twenty thousand francs a year. Not much in these days."

"But your wife has also inherited."

"Yes. A million between us. Forty thousand francs income. We cannot even keep a carriage on it."

They had reached the last of the reception rooms, and before them lay the conservatory—a huge winter garden full of tall, tropical trees, sheltering clumps of rare flowers. They walked on carpets exactly like moss, between two thick rows of shrubs. All at once Duroy noticed on his left, under a wide dome of palms, a broad basin of white marble, large enough to bathe in, on the edge of which four large Delft swans poured forth water through their open beaks. The bottom of the basin was strewn with golden sand, and swimming about in it were some enormous goldfish, quaint Chinese monsters, with projecting eyes and scales edged with blue, mandarins of the waters who recalled, thus suspended above this gold-colored ground, the quaint embroideries of the Flowery Land. The journalist halted with beating heart. He said to himself: "Here is luxury. These are the houses in which one ought to live. Others have attained it. Why should not I?"

He thought of methods of doing so; did not find them at once, and grew irritated at his powerlessness. His companion, somewhat thoughtful, did not

speak. He looked at her sideways, and again thought: "All that was necessary was to have married this little puppet."

But Susan all at once seemed to wake up. "Attention!" said she; and pushing George through a group which barred their way, she made him turn sharply to the right. They were now in front of the painting. It was the powerful and unexpected work of a master; one of those works which stir the mind and give you something to dream of for years. People who look at such things at the outset remain silent, and then go thoughtfully away, and only speak later on of the worth of the painting.

Duroy, having contemplated it for some time, said: "It is nice to be able to afford such trifles."

But as he was pushed against by others coming to see it, he went away, still keeping on his arm Susan's little hand, which he squeezed slightly. She said: "Would you like a glass of champagne? Come to the refreshment buffet. We shall find papa there."

And they slowly passed back through the rooms in which the crowd was increasing, noisy and at home, the fashionable crowd of a public fête. George all at once thought he heard a voice say: "It is Laroche-Mathieu and Madame Duroy." These words flitted past his ear like those distant sounds borne by the wind. Whence came they? He looked about on all sides, and indeed saw his wife passing by on the minister's arm. They were chatting intimately in a low tone, smiling, and with their eyes fixed on one another's.

They reached the dining room—an immense apartment, with marble columns, and walls hung with old tapestry. Walter perceived his descriptive writer, and darted forward to take him by the

hands. He was intoxicated with joy. "Have you seen everything? Have you shown him everything, Susan? What a lot of people, eh, Bel-Ami! Did you see the Prince de Guerche? He came and drank a glass of punch here just now," he exclaimed.

Then he darted toward the Senator Rissolin, who was towing along his wife, bewildered and bedecked like a stall at a fair. A gentleman bowed to Susan, a tall, thin fellow, slightly bald, with yellow whiskers, and that air of good breeding which is everywhere recognizable. George heard his name mentioned, the Marquis de Cazolles, and became suddenly jealous of him. How long had she known him? Since her accession to wealth, no doubt. He divined a suitor.

He was taken by the arm. It was Norbert de Varenne. The old poet was airing his long hair and worn dress coat with a weary and indifferent air.

He had a glass filled for himself, and, bowing to Duroy, who had taken another, said: "I drink to the triumph of wit over wealth." Then he added softly:

"Not that wealth on the part of others hurts me, or that I am angry at it. But I protest on principle."

George no longer listened to him. He was looking for Susan, who had just disappeared with the Marquis de Cazolles, and, abruptly quitting Norbert de Varenne, set out in pursuit of the young girl. A dense crowd in quest of refreshments checked him. When he at length made his way through it, he found himself face to face with the De Marelles. He had not for some time past met the husband, who seized both his hands, saying:

"How can I thank you, my dear fellow, for the advice you gave me through Clotilde? I have gained

close on a hundred thousand francs over the Morocco loan. It is to you I owe them. You are a valuable friend."

Several men turned round to look at the pretty and elegant brunette. Duroy replied: "In exchange for that service, my dear fellow, I am going to take your wife, or rather to offer her my arm. Husband and wife are best apart, you know."

Monsieur de Marelle bowed, saying: "You are quite right. If I lose you, we will meet here in an hour."

"Exactly."

The pair plunged into the crowd, followed by the husband. Clotilde kept saying: "How lucky these Walters are! That is what it is to have business intelligence."

George replied: "Bah! Clever men always make a position one way or another."

She said: "Here are two girls who will have from twenty to thirty millions apiece. Without reckoning that Susan is pretty."

He said nothing. His own idea coming from another's mouth irritated him. She had not yet seen the picture of "Jesus Walking on the Waters," and he proposed to take her to it. They amused themselves by talking scandal of the people they recognized, and making fun of those they did not. Saint-Potin passed by, bearing on the lapel of his coat a number of decorations, which greatly amused them. An ex-ambassador following him showed far fewer.

Duroy remarked: "What a mixed salad of society."

Boisrenard, who shook hands with him, had also adorned his buttonhole with the green and yellow ribbon worn on the day of the duel.

But, on passing through the greenhouse, he no-

ticed his wife seated beside Laroche-Mathieu, both almost hidden behind a clump of plants. It appeared as if they were saying: "We have appointed a meeting here, a meeting in public. For we do not care a rap what people think."

Madame de Marelle agreed that the Jesus of Karl Marcowitch was astounding, and they retraced their steps.

Susan seized on them as they passed through a doorway, exclaiming: "Ah! here you are. Well, pretty boy, you must remain alone. I am going to take away Clotilde to show her my room."

The two moved rapidly away, gliding through the throng with that undulating, snakelike motion women know how to adopt in a crowd. Almost immediately a voice murmured: "George."

It was Madame Walter, who went on in a low tone:

"Oh! how you do make me suffer without reason. I told Susan to get your companion away in order to be able to say a word to you. Listen, I must speak to you this evening, I must, or you don't know what I will do. Go into the conservatory. You will find a door on the left leading out into the garden. Follow the path in front of it. At the end of it you will find an arbor. Wait for me there in ten minutes' time. If you won't, I declare to you that I will create a scene here at once."

He replied loftily: "Very well. I will be at the spot you mention within ten minutes."

And they separated. But Jacques Rival almost made him late. He had taken him by the arm and was telling him a lot of things in a very excited manner. He slowly went along the walk, seeing his way with difficulty after coming out of the bright light of the reception rooms. He could distinguish

to the right and left leafless shrubs, the little branches of which were quivering. Light filtered through their branches, coming from the windows of the mansion.

He saw something white in the middle of the path in front of him, and Madame Walter, with bare arms and neck, said in a quivering voice: "Ah! here you are; you want to kill me, then?"

He answered quietly: "No melodramatics, I beg of you, or I shall bolt at once."

She had seized his arm, and with her lips close to his, said: "But what have I done to you? You are behaving toward me like a wretch. What have I done to you?"

He tried to repulse her. "You wound your hair round every one of my buttons last time I saw you, and it almost brought about a rupture between my wife and myself."

She was surprised for a moment, and then, shaking her head, said: "Oh! your wife would not mind. It was one some one else who made a scene over it."

He looked at her with astonishment. She was no longer the big, frolicsome tomboy he had known, but a bewildered, desperate woman, capable of anything. A vague project, however, arose in his mind. He replied: "My dear, love is not eternal. We meet and leave one another. But when it drags on it becomes a terrible bore. I will have no more of it. That is the truth. However, if you can be reasonable, and receive and treat me as a friend, I will come as I used to. Do you feel capable of that?"

She murmured: "I am capable of anything in order to see you."

"Then it is agreed on," said he; "we are friends, and nothing more."

She stammered: "It is agreed on;" and then, holding out her lips to him: "One more kiss; the last."

He refused gently, saying: "No, we must keep to our agreement."

She turned aside, wiping away a couple of tears, and then, drawing from her bosom a bundle of papers, offered it to Duroy, saying: "Here; it is your share of the profit in the Morocco affair. I was so pleased to have gained it for you. Here, take it."

He wanted to refuse, observing: "No, I will not take that money."

Then she grew indignant. "Ah! so you won't take it now. It is yours, yours only. If you do not take it, I will throw it into the gutter. You won't act like that, George?"

He received the little bundle, and slipped it into his pocket.

"We must go in," said he; "you will catch cold."

She murmured: "So much the better, if I could die."

She took one of his hands, kissed it passionately, with rage and despair, and fled toward the house. He returned, quietly reflecting. Then he reëntered the conservatory with haughty forehead and smiling lip. His wife and Laroche-Mathieu were no longer there. The crowd was thinning. It was becoming evident that they would not stay for the dance. He perceived Susan arm in arm with her sister. They both came toward him to ask him to dance the first quadrille with the Comte de Latour-Yvelin.

He was astonished, and asked: "Who is he?"

Susan answered maliciously: "A new friend of my sister's."

Rose blushed, and murmured: "You are very

spiteful, Susan; he is no more my friend than yours."

Duroy familiarly took Susan by the elbow, and said in his caressing voice: "Listen, my dear, you believe me to be your friend?"

"Yes, Bel-Ami."

"You have confidence in me?"

"Perfect confidence."

"Well, then, will you promise me one thing?"

"Yes; but what is it?"

"To consult me every time that your hand is asked for, and not to accept any one without taking my advice."

"Very well."

"And to keep this a secret between us two. Not a word of it to your father or your mother."

"Not a word."

"It is a promise, then?"

"It is a promise."

Rival came up with a bustling air. "Mademoiselle, your papa wants you for the dance."

She said: "Come along, Bel-Ami."

But he refused, having made up his mind to leave at once, wishing to be alone in order to think. Too many new ideas had entered his mind, and he began to look for his wife. In a short time he saw her drinking chocolate at the buffet with two gentlemen unknown to him. She introduced her husband without mentioning their names to him. After a few moments, he said:

"Shall we go?"

"Whenever you please."

She took his arm, and they walked back through the reception rooms, in which the public were growing few. She said: "Where is Madame Walter? I should like to wish her good-by."

"It is better not. She would try to keep us for the ball, and I have had enough of this."

"That is so; you are quite right."

All the way home they were silent. But as soon as they were in their room, Madeleine said smilingly, before even taking off her veil: "I have a surprise for you."

He growled ill-temperedly: "What is it?"

"Guess."

"I will make no such effort."

"Well, the day after to-morrow is the first of January."

"Yes."

"The time for New Year's gifts."

"Yes."

"Here's one for you that Laroche-Mathieu gave me just now."

She gave him a little black box resembling a jewel case. He opened it indifferently, and saw the cross of the Legion of Honor. He grew somewhat pale, and then smiled, and said: "I should have preferred ten millions. That did not cost him much." She had expected an outburst of joy, and was irritated at this coolness. "You are really incredible. Nothing satisfies you now," said she.

He replied tranquilly: "That man is only paying his debt, and he still owes me a great deal."

She was astonished at his tone, and resumed: "It is, though, a big thing at your age."

He remarked: "All things are relative. I could have something bigger now."

He had taken the case, and, placing it on the mantelshelf, looked for some moments at the glittering star it contained. Then he closed it and went to bed, shrugging his shoulders.

The *Journal Officiel* of the first of January an-

nounced the nomination of Monsieur Prosper-George du Roy, journalist, to the dignity of chevalier of the Legion of Honor, for special services. The name was written in two words, which gave George more pleasure than the derivation itself.

An hour after having read this piece of news, he received a note from Madame Walter, begging him to come and dine with her that evening with his wife, to celebrate his new honors. He hesitated for a few moments, and then, throwing this note, written in ambiguous terms, into the fire, said to Madeleine: "We are going to dinner at the Walters' this evening."

She was astonished. "Why, I thought you never wanted to set foot in the house again."

He only remarked: "I have changed my mind."

When they arrived, Madame Walter was alone in the little Louis XVI boudoir she had appropriated to the reception of personal friends. Dressed in black, with her hair powdered, she looked charming.

She had the air at a distance of an old woman, and close at hand of a young one, and when one looked at her well, of a pretty snare for the eyes.

"You are in mourning?" inquired Madeleine.

She replied sadly: "Yes, and no. I have not lost any relatives. But I have reached the age when one wears the mourning of one's life. I wear it today to inaugurate it. In future I shall wear it in my heart."

Duroy thought: "Will this resolution last?"

The dinner was somewhat dull. Susan alone chattered incessantly. Rose seemed preoccupied. The journalist was warmly congratulated. During the evening they strolled chatting through the reception rooms and the conservatory. As Duroy was

walking behind the rest with Madame Walter, she held him back by the arm.

"Listen," said she, in a low voice: "I will never speak to you of anything again, never. But come and see me, George. It is impossible for me to live without you, impossible."

He answered quietly: "I understand. It is useless to speak of all that again. You see, I came here to-day, at once, on receiving your letter."

Walter, who had walked on in advance with his two daughters and Madeleine, was waiting for Duroy beside the picture of "Jesus Walking on the Waters."

"Just imagine," said he, laughing, "I found my wife yesterday on her knees before this picture, as if in a chapel. She was paying her devotions."

Madame Walter replied in a firm voice—a voice thrilling with secret exultation: "It is that Christ who will save my soul. He gives me strength and courage every time I look at Him." And, pausing in front of the Divinity standing amidst the waters, she murmured: "How handsome He is. How afraid of Him those men are, and yet how they love Him. Look at His head, His eyes, how simple, and yet how supernatural at the same time."

Susan exclaimed: "But He resembles you, Bel-Ami. I am sure. He resembles you. If you had a beard, or if He were clean shaven, you would be both alike. Oh! but it is striking!"

She insisted on his standing beside the picture, and they all, indeed, recognized that the two faces resembled one another. Every one was astonished. Walter thought it very singular. Madeleine, smiling, declared that Jesus had a more manly air. Madame Walters stood motionless, gazing fixedly at the face of Duroy beside the face of Christ.

CHAPTER XVI

IN FLAGRANTE DELICTU

DURING the remainder of the winter the Duroys often visited the Walters. George even dined there by himself continually, Madeleine saying that she was tired, and preferred to remain at home. He had adopted Friday as a regular day, and Madame Walter never invited any one that evening; it belonged to Bel-Ami, to him alone. After dinner they played cards, and fed the goldfish, amusing themselves like a family circle.

Toward the end of March the marriage of the two sisters was all at once alluded to. Rose, it was said, was to marry the Comte de Latour-Yvelin, and Susan the Marquis de Cazolles. These two gentlemen had become familiars of the household, those familiars to whom special favors and marked privileges are granted. George and Susan continued to live in a species of free and

fraternal intimacy, romping for hours, making fun of every one, and seeming greatly to enjoy one another's company. They had never spoken again of the possible marriage of the young girl nor of the suitors who offered themselves.

Mr. Walter had brought George home to luncheon one morning. Immediately after the repast Madame Walter was called to see one of the tradesmen, and the young fellow said to Susan: "Let us go and feed the goldfish."

They each took a piece of bread from the table and went into the conservatory. As they leaned over the edge of the marble basin, George and Susan saw their own faces looking up from the water, and smiled at them. All at once he said in a low voice: "It is not kind to hide things from me, Susan."

"What do you mean, Bel-Ami?" asked she.

"Don't you remember what you promised me here on the evening of the fête?"

"No."

"To consult me every time your hand was asked for."

"Well?"

"Well, it has been asked for."

"By whom?"

"You know very well."

"No. I swear to you."

"Yes, you do. That great fop, the Marquis de Cazolles."

"He is not a fop, in the first place."

"It may be so, but he is stupid, ruined by play, and worn out by dissipation. It is really a bad match for you, so pretty, so fresh, and so intelligent."

She inquired, smiling: "What have you against him?"

"I? Nothing."

"Yes, you have. He is not all that you say."

"Nonsense. He is a fool and an intriguer."

She turned round somewhat, leaving off looking into the water, and said: "Come, what is the matter with you?"

He said, as though a secret were being wrenched from the bottom of his heart: "I—I—am jealous of him."

She was slightly astonished, saying: "You?"

"Yes, I."

"Why so?"

"Because I am in love with you, and you know it very well, you naughty girl."

She said in a severe tone: "You are mad, Bel-Ami."

He replied: "I know very well that I am mad. Ought I to have admitted that—I, a married man, to you, a young girl? I am more than mad, I am guilty. I have no possible hope, and the thought of that drives me out of my senses. And when I hear it said that you are going to be married, I have fits of rage, so that I could kill some one. You must forgive me this, Susan."

He was silent. The young girl murmured half sadly, half gayly: "It is a pity that you are married. What is to be done? It cannot be helped. It is done."

He turned suddenly toward her and said, speaking close to her face: "If I were free, would you marry me?"

She replied in a tone of sincerity: "Yes, Bel-Ami, I would marry you, for you please me far better than any of the others."

He rose and stammered: "Thanks, thanks; do not say 'yes' to any one yet, I beg of you; wait a

little longer, I entreat you. Will you promise me this much? ''

She murmured, somewhat uneasy, and without understanding what he wanted: '' Yes, I promise you.''

Duroy threw the lump of bread he still held in his hand into the water, and fled as though he had lost his head, without wishing her good-by.

Susan, surprised and uneasy, got up and returned slowly to the dining room. The journalist had left.

He came home very calm, and as Madeleine was writing letters, said to her: '' Are you going to dine at the Walters' on Friday? I am going.''

She hesitated and replied: '' No. I do not feel very well. I would rather stay at home.''

He remarked: '' Just as you like.''

Then he took his hat and went out again at once. For some time past he had been keeping watch over her, following her about, knowing all her movements. The hour he had been awaiting was at length at hand. He had not been deceived by the tone in which she had said: '' I would rather stay at home.''

He was very amiable toward her during the next few days. He even appeared lively, which was not usual, and she said: '' You are growing quite nice again.''

He dressed early on the Friday, in order to make some calls before going to the Walters', he said. He started just before six, after having kissed his wife, and went and took a cab at the Place Notre Dame de Lorette. He said to the driver: '' Stop in front of Number 17 Rue Fontaine, and stay there till I tell you to go on again. Then drive to the Cock Pheasant restaurant in the Rue Lafayette.''

The cab started at a slow trot, and Duroy drew down the blinds. As soon as he was opposite his door, he did not take his eyes off it. After waiting ten minutes he saw Madeleine come out and go in the direction of the outer boulevards. As soon as she had gone far enough he put his head through the window, and said to the driver: "Go on." The cab started again, and landed him in front of the Cock Pheasant, a well-known middle-class restaurant. George went into the main dining-room and ate slowly, looking at his watch from time to time. At half-past seven, when he had finished his coffee, drunk two *petits verres* of the best brandy, and slowly smoked a good cigar, he went out, hailed another cab that was going by empty, and was driven to the Rue La Rouchefoucauld. Without making any inquiry of the concierge, he went upstairs, to the third story of the house he had told the man to drive to, and when a servant opened the door to him, said: "Monsieur Guibert de Lorme is at home, is he not?"

"Yes, sir."

He was ushered into the drawing-room, where he waited for a few moments. Then a gentleman came in, tall, and with a military bearing, gray-haired, though still young, and wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. Duroy bowed and said: "As I foresaw, commissary, my wife is now dining under suspicious circumstances in furnished rooms in the Rue des Martyrs."

The commissary of police bowed, saying: "I am at your service, sir."

George continued: "You have until nine o'clock, have you not? That limit of time passed, you can no longer enter a private dwelling to prove a crime."

"No, sir; seven o'clock in winter, nine o'clock from the thirty-first of March. It is the fifth of April, so we have till nine o'clock."

"Very well, commissary, I have a cab downstairs."

"As you like, sir." The commissary left the room, and then returned with an overcoat, hiding his tri-colored sash.

They went first to the police office to pick up three officers in plain clothes, who were awaiting them, for George had given notice during the day that the surprise would take place that evening. One of the men got on the box beside the driver. The other two entered the cab, which reached the Rue des Martyrs. Duroy said:

"I have a plan of the rooms. They are on the second floor. We shall first find a little anteroom, then a dining room, then the bedroom. The three rooms open into one another. There is no way out to facilitate flight."

When they arrived opposite the house it was only a quarter past eight, and they waited in silence for more than twenty minutes. But when he saw the three-quarters about to strike, George said: "Let us start now."

They went up the stairs without troubling themselves about the doorkeeper, who, indeed, did not notice them.

At the end of two or three minutes George again pulled the bell several times in succession. They noted a noise from the further end of the rooms, and then a light step approached. Some one was coming to spy who was there. The journalist then rapped smartly on the panel of the door. A voice, a woman's voice, with an attempt to disguise it, asked: "Who is there?"

The commissary replied: "Open, in the name of the law."

The voice repeated: "Who are you?"

"I am the commissary of police. Open the door, or I will have it broken in."

The voice went on: "What do you want?"

Duroy said: "It is I. It is useless to try to escape."

The light step, the tread of bare feet, was heard to withdraw, and then in a few seconds to return.

George said: "If you won't open, we will break in the door." He grasped the handle, and pushed slowly with his shoulder. As there was no longer any reply, he suddenly gave such a violent and vigorous shock that the old lock gave way. The screws were torn out of the wood, and he almost fell over Madeleine, who was standing in the anteroom.

An hour later, George Duroy entered the offices of the *Vie Française*. Monsieur Walter was already there, for he continued to manage and supervise his paper with great care. It had enormously increased in circulation, and greatly helped the schemes of his bank. The manager raised his head and said: "Ah! here you are. You look very strange. Why did you not come to dinner with us? What have you been up to?"

The young fellow, sure of his effect, said, emphasizing every word: "I have just overthrown the Minister of Foreign Affairs."

The other thought he was joking, and said: "Overthrown what?"

"I am going to turn out the cabinet. That is all. It is quite time to get rid of that carrion."

The old man thought that his editor must be drunk. He murmured: "Come, you are talking nonsense."

"Not at all. I have just caught Monsieur Laroche-Mathieu *in flagrante delictu* with my wife. The commissary of police has verified the fact. The minister is done for." Walter, amazed, pushed his spectacles right back on his forehead, and said: "You are not hoaxing me?"

"Not at all. I am even going to write an article on it."

"But what do you want to do?"

"To upset that scoundrel, that wretch, that barefaced criminal." George placed his hat on an armchair, and added: "Woe to those who cross my path. I never forgive."

The manager still failed to understand. He murmured: "But—your wife?"

"My application for a divorce will be lodged tomorrow morning. I shall return her to the departed Forestier."

"You mean to get a divorce?"

"Yes. I made myself ridiculous. But I had to do it in order to catch them. That's done. I am master of the situation."

Monsieur Walter could not get over it, and watched Duroy with startled eyes, thinking: "Hang it, here is a fellow to beware of."

George went on: "I am now free. I have some money. I shall offer myself as a candidate at the October elections for my native place, where I am well known. I could not take a position or make myself respected with that woman who was suspected by every one. She had caught me like a fool, humbugged and ensnared me. But since I became alive to her little game I kept watch on her." He began to laugh, and added: "It was poor Forestier who was the fool without imagining it, confiding and tranquil. Now I am free. Now I shall get on."

And Daddy Walter, still looking at him with unveiled eyes, his spectacles remaining pushed up on his forehead, said to himself: "Yes, he will get on, the rascal."

George rose: "I am going to write the article. It must be done discreetly. But you know it will be terrible for the minister. He has gone under. He cannot be fished up again. The *Vie Française* no longer needs to stand in awe of him."

The older man hesitated a few moments, and then made up his mind. "Do so," said he; "so much the worse for those who get into such scrapes."

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAST PLOT

THREE months had elapsed, and Duroy's divorce had just been granted. His wife had resumed the name of Forestier, and, as the Walters were to leave on the 15th of July for Trouville, it was decided that he and they should spend a day in the country together before they started. Bel-Ami had asked to be the only man of the party, for he could not endure the presence of the Marquis de Cazolles. But at the last moment it was decided that the Comte de Latour-Yvelin should be called for on the way. He had been invited the day before.

The carriage passed along the Avenue des Champs Elysées at a swinging trot, and then traversed the Bois de Boulogne. It was splendid summer weather, not too warm. They crossed the Seine, skirted Mount Valerien, and gained Bougival in order to follow the river as far as Le Pecq.

The Comte de Latour-Yvelin, a man advancing toward middle age, with long, light whiskers, gazed tenderly at Rose. They had been engaged for a month. George, who was very pale, often looked at Susan, who was pale, too. Their glances constantly met and seemed to blend, to understand one another, to secretly exchange a thought, and then to avoid one another. Madame Walter was quiet and happy.

The luncheon was long. Before starting back to Paris, George suggested a turn on the terrace. They stopped at first to admire the view. All ranged themselves in a line along the parapet, and went into ecstasies over the far-stretching horizon.

Walter said: "Such a panorama is not to be found anywhere in the world. There is not one to match it in Switzerland."

Then they all began to walk on slowly, to take a stroll and enjoy the view. George and Susan remained behind. As soon as they were a few paces distant from the others, he said to her in a low and restrained voice: "Susan, I adore you. I love you to madness."

She murmured: "So do I love you, Bel-Ami."

He went on: "If I do not have you for my wife, I shall leave Paris, and this country."

She replied: "Ask papa for my hand. Perhaps he will consent."

He made a gesture of impatience. "No, I tell you for the twentieth time that is useless. The door of your house would be closed to me. I would be dismissed from the paper, and we should not be able even to see one another. Those would be the consequences if I should propose for you in the conventional manner. They have promised you to the Marquis de Cazolles. They hope that you will end by saying 'yes,' and they are waiting for that."

She asked: "What is to be done?"

He hesitated, glancing at her sideways. "Do you love me enough to run a risk?"

She answered resolutely: "Yes."

"Very well, there is one way and only one. The thing must come from you and not from me. You are a spoiled child; they let you say whatever you like, and they will not be too much astonished at one act of daring the more on your part. Listen, then: This evening, on reaching home, you must go to your mamma first, your mamma alone, and tell her you want to marry me. She will be greatly moved and very angry——"

Susan interrupted him with: "Oh! mamma will agree."

He went on quickly: "No, you do not know her. She will be more vexed and angrier than your father. You will see how she will refuse. But you must be firm, you must not give way, you must repeat that you want to marry me and no one else. Will you do this?"

"I will."

"On leaving your mother, you must tell your father the same thing in a very serious and decided manner."

"Yes, yes; and then?"

"And then it is that matters become serious. If you are determined, very determined—very, very determined to be my wife, my dear, dear little Susan—I will—run away with you."

She gave a great start of joy, and almost clapped her hands. "Oh! how delightful. You will run away with me. When will you run away with me?"

All the old poetry of nocturnal elopements, post-chaises, country inns; all the charming adventures told in books flashed through her mind, like an en-

chanting dream about to be realized. She repeated: "When will you run away with me?"

He replied, in low tones: "This evening—to-night."

She asked, quivering: "And where shall we go?"

"That is my secret. Reflect on what you are doing. Remember that after such a flight you can only be my wife. It is the only way, but it is—it is very dangerous—for you."

She declared: "I have made up my mind; where shall I meet you?"

"Can you get out of the hotel alone?"

"Yes. I know how to undo the little door."

"Well, when the doorkeeper has gone to bed, toward midnight, come and meet me on the Place de la Concorde. You will find me in a cab drawn up in front of the Ministry of Marine."

"I will come."

"Really?"

"Really."

He took her hand and pressed it. "Oh! how I love you. How good and brave you are! So you don't want to marry Monsieur de Cazolles?"

"Oh, no!"

"Your father was very angry when you said no?"

"I should think so. He wanted to send me back to the convent."

"You see that it is necessary to be energetic."

"I will be so."

She looked at the vast horizon, her head full of the idea of being run off with. She would go further than that—with him. She would be run away with. She was proud of it. She scarcely thought of her reputation—of what shame might befall her.

Was she aware of it? Did she even suspect it?

Madame Walter, turning around, exclaimed: "Come along, little one. What are you doing with Bel-Ami?"

They rejoined the others and spoke of the seaside, where they would soon be. Then they returned home by way of Chatou, in order not to go over the same road twice. George no longer spoke. He reflected. If this little girl had a little courage, he was going to succeed at last. For three months he had been enveloping her in his net. He had made himself loved by her, as he knew how to make himself loved. He had captured her childish soul without difficulty. He had at first made her promise that she would refuse Monsieur de Cazolles. He had just made her promise that she would fly with him. For there was no other way. Madame Walter, he well understood, would never agree to give him her daughter. Thinking of all this, he replied in broken phrases to the remarks addressed to him, and which he did not hear. He only seemed to come to himself when they reëntered Paris.

Susan, too, was thinking, and the bells of the four horses rang in her ears, making her see endless miles of highway under eternal moonlight, gloomy forests traversed, wayside inns, and the hurry of the hostlers to change horses, for every one guesses that they are being pursued.

When the landau entered the courtyard of the town house, they wanted to keep George to dinner. He refused, and went home. After having eaten a little, he went through his papers, as if about to start on a long journey. He burned some compromising letters, hid others, and wrote to some friends. From time to time he looked at the clock, thinking: "Things must be getting warm there."

And a sense of uneasiness gnawed at his heart. Supposing he should fail? But what had he to fear? He could always get out of it. Yet it was a big game he was playing that evening.

He went out toward eleven o'clock, wandered about some time, took a cab, and had it drawn up in the Place de la Concorde, in front of the Ministry of Marine. From time to time he struck a match to see the time by his watch. As he saw midnight approaching, his impatience became feverish. Every moment he thrust his head out of the window to look. A distant clock struck twelve, then another, nearer, then two together, then a last one, very far away. When the latter had ceased to sound, he thought: "It is all over. It is a failure. She won't come." He had made up his mind, however, to wait till daylight. In these matters one must be a patient.

He heard the quarter strike, then the half hour, then three-quarters, and all the clocks struck "one," as they had struck midnight. He no longer expected her; he was merely remaining, racking his brain to divine what could have happened. All at once a woman's head was put through the carriage window, and a voice said: "Are you there, Bel-Ami?"

He started, almost choked with emotion: "Is that you, Susan?"

"Yes, it is I."

He could not manage to turn the handle quickly enough, and repeated: "Ah! it is you, it is you; come inside."

She came in and fell against him. He said: "Go on," to the driver, and the cab started.

She gasped, without saying a word.

He asked: "Well, how did it go off?"

She murmured, almost fainting: "Oh! it was terrible, especially with mamma."

The cab rolled along the street. George took one of the young girl's hands and began to kiss it slowly and with respect. He scarcely knew what to say to her, being scarcely accustomed to platonic love-making. But all at once he thought he noticed that she was crying. He inquired, with alarm: "What is the matter with you, darling?"

She replied, in tearful tones: "Poor mamma, she will not be able to sleep if she has found out that I have gone."

Her mother, indeed, was not asleep.

As soon as Susan had left the room, Madame Walter remained face to face with her husband. She asked, bewildered and stunned: "Good God! What is the meaning of this?"

Walter exclaimed furiously: "It means that that schemer has bewitched her. It is he who made her refuse Cazolles. He thinks her dowry worth trying for." He began to walk angrily up and down the room, and went on: "You were always luring him here, too, yourself; you flattered him, you cajoled him, you could not coddle him enough. It was Bel-Ami here, Bel-Ami there, from morning till night. This is your reward."

She murmured with livid face: "I—I lured him?"

He shouted in her face: "Yes, you. You are all mad over him—Madame de Marelle, Susan, and the rest. Do you think I did not see that you could not pass a couple of days without having him here?"

She drew herself up tragically: "I will not allow you to speak to me like that. You forget that I was not brought up like you, behind a counter."

He stood for a moment, stupefied, and then uttered a furious "Damn it all," and rushed out, slamming the door after him. As soon as she was alone she thought for a long time over the possible innocence or perfidy of this man. What a scoundrel if he had prepared the blow! And what would happen? What dangers and what tortures she foresaw! If he knew nothing all could yet be arranged. They would travel about with Susan for six months, and it would be all over. But how could she meet him herself afterward? She looked at the clock, it was past one. She said to herself: "I cannot remain like this, I shall go mad. I must know. I will wake up Susan and question her."

She went, barefooted, in order not to make a noise, with a candle in her hand, toward her daughter's room. She opened the door softly, went in, and looked at the bed. It had not been lain in. She did not comprehend matters at first, and thought that the girl might still be arguing with her father. But all at once a horrible suspicion crossed her mind, and she rushed to her husband's room. She reached it in a bound, blanched and gasping for breath. He was in bed reading.

He asked, startled: "Well, what is it? What is the matter with you?"

She stammered: "Have you seen Susan?"

"I? No; why?"

"She has—she has—gone! She is not in her room."

He sprang to the floor, thrust his feet into his slippers, and, with his shirt tails floating in the air, rushed in turn to his daughter's room. As soon as he saw it, he no longer retained any doubt. She had fled. He dropped into a chair and placed his lamp on the ground in front of him.

His wife had rejoined him, and stammered: "Well?"

He had no longer the strength to reply; he was no longer enraged, he only groaned: "It is done, he has got her. We are done for."

She did not understand, and said: "What do you mean, done for?"

"Yes, by Jove. He will certainly marry her now."

She gave a cry like that of a wild beast: "He, never! You must be mad."

He replied sadly: "It is no use screaming. He has run away with her. The best thing is to give her to him. By setting to work in the right way no one will know anything of this escapade."

She repeated, shaken by terrible emotion: "Never, never; he shall never have Susan. I will never consent."

Walter murmured dejectedly: "But he has got her. It is done. And he will keep her and hide her as long as we do not yield. So, to avoid scandal, we must give in at once."

He ended by getting angry, and taking up, as a practical man, the cudgels on behalf of Bel-Ami: "Hold your tongue," said he. "I tell you again that it must be so; it absolutely must. And who knows? Perhaps we shall not regret it. With men of that stamp one never knows what may happen. You saw how he overthrew in three articles that fool of a Laroche-Mathieu, and how he did it with dignity, which was infernally difficult in his position as the husband. At all events, we shall see. It just comes to this, that we are trapped. We cannot get out of it."

She felt a longing to scream, to roll on the ground, to tear her hair out. She said at length, in

exasperated tones: "He shall not have her. I won't have it."

Walter rose, picked up his lamp, and remarked: "There you are, stupid just like all women. You never do anything except from passion. You do not know how to bend yourself to circumstances. You are all stupid. I tell you that he shall marry her. He must."

He went out, shuffling along in his slippers. He was a comical figure in his night-shirt as he traversed the broad corridor of the huge, silent house, and noiselessly reëntered his room.

Madame Walter remained standing, torn by intolerable grief. She did not yet quite understand it. She was only conscious of suffering. Then it seemed to her that she could not remain there motionless till daylight. She felt within her an urgent need of fleeing, of running away, of seeking help, of obtaining succor. She took her candle, left the room, and went downstairs to the conservatory. The picture of Jesus was right at the end of it in a small drawing-room, shut off by a glass door, in order that the humidity from the soil should not damage the canvas. It formed a kind of chapel in a forest of strange trees. The poor woman walked slowly, oppressed by the shadows, amid which appeared, by the flickering light of her candle, immense plants, recalling monsters, living creatures, hideous deformities. All at once she caught sight of the picture of Christ. She opened the door separating her from it, and fell on her knees. She prayed to Him, wildly at first, stammering forth words of true, passionate, and despairing invocations. Then, the ardor of her appeal slackening, she raised her eyes toward Him, and was struck with anguish. He resembled Bel-Ami so strongly, in the trembling light of this soli-

tary candle lighting the picture from below, that it was no longer Christ—it was Bel-Ami who was looking at her. They were his eyes, his forehead, the expression of his face, his cold and haughty air.

She stammered: "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" and the name "George" rose to her lips. All at once she uttered a loud cry and fell on her back. Her candle, overturned, went out.

The next morning, Madame Walter was found stretched out senseless, almost asphyxiated, before "Jesus Walking on the Waters." She was so ill that they feared for her life. She only fully recovered the use of her senses the following day. Then she began to weep. The disappearance of Susan was explained to the servants as due to her being suddenly sent back to the convent. And Monsieur Walter replied to a long letter of Duroy by granting him his daughter's hand. Bel-Ami had posted this letter at the moment of leaving Paris, for he had prepared it in advance the evening of his departure. He said in it, in respectful terms, that he had long loved the young girl; that there had never been any agreement between them; but that finding her come freely to him to say: "I wish to be your wife," he considered himself authorized in keeping her, even in hiding her, until he had obtained an answer from her parents, whose legal power had for him less weight than the wish of his betrothed. He begged Monsieur Walter to address his reply "Post-restante," a friend being charged to forward the letter to him.

When he had obtained what he wished, he brought back Susan to Paris, and sent her on to her parents, abstaining from appearing himself for some little time.

They had spent six days on the banks of the Seine at La Roche Guyon.

The young girl had never enjoyed herself so much. She had played at pastoral life. As he passed her off as his sister, they lived in a free and chaste intimacy—a kind of loving friendship. He thought it a clever stroke to respect her. On the day after their arrival, she had bought some underwear and some peasant's clothes, and set to work fishing, with a huge straw hat, ornamented with wild flowers, on her head. She thought the country delightful. There was an old tower and an old château, in which beautiful tapestries were exhibited.

George, dressed in a fisherman's jersey, bought from a local tradesman, escorted Susan now on foot along the banks of the river, now in a boat. They kissed at every moment, she in all innocence, and he ready to succumb to temptation. But he was able to restrain himself; and when he said to her: "We will go back to Paris to-morrow, your father has granted me your hand," she murmured simply: "Already? It was so nice being with you, Bel-Ami."

CHAPTER XVIII

HE LAUGHS WHO WINS

IT was dark in the little suite of rooms in the Rue de Constantinople; for George Duroy and Clotilde de Marelle, having met at the door, had gone in at once, and she had said to him, without giving him time to open the Venetian blinds: "So you are going to marry Susan Walter?" He admitted it quietly, and added: "Did not you know it?"

She exclaimed, standing before him, furious and indignant: "So you are going to marry Susan Walter? That is a little too much of a good thing. For three months you have been pretending to me in order to hide it from me. Every one knew it but I. It was my husband who told me of it."

Duroy began to laugh, though somewhat confused all the same; and having placed his hat on a corner of the mantelshelf, sat down in an armchair. She looked him straight in the face, and said, in a low and irritated tone: "Ever since you left your wife you have been pre-

paring for this move, and you only amused yourself with me to fill up the interim. What a rascal you are!"

He asked: "Why so? I had a wife who deceived me. I caught her, I obtained a divorce, and I am going to marry another. What could be simpler?"

She murmured, quivering: "Oh! how cunning and dangerous you are!"

He began to smile again.

"By Jove! Simpletons and fools are always some one's dupes."

But she continued to follow out her idea: "I ought to have guessed your character from the beginning. But, no; I could not believe that you could be such a blackguard as that."

He assumed an air of dignity, saying: "I beg of you to be careful about the words you are making use of."

His indignation revolted her: "What? You want me to put on gloves in dealing with you now. You have behaved toward me like a vagabond ever since I have known you, and you want to make out that I am not to tell you so. You deceive every one; you take advantage of every one; you filch money and enjoyment wherever you can, and you want me to treat you as an honest man!"

He rose, and, with quivering lip, said: "Be quiet, or I will turn you out of here."

"Do you think I don't know how you robbed Madeleine of half Vaudrec's money? Do you think I don't know how you obliged Susan to marry you?"

He seized her by the shoulders, and, shaking her with both hands, exclaimed: "Don't speak of her, at any rate. I won't have it."

She screamed out: "You deceived her; I know you did."

He would have accepted no matter what, but this falsehood exasperated him. The truths she had told him to his face had caused thrills of anger to run through him, but this lie respecting the young girl who was going to be his wife aroused in the palm of his hand a furious longing to strike her.

He repeated: "Be quiet—have a care—be quiet," and shook her as one shakes a branch to make the fruit fall.

She screamed, with her hair coming down, her mouth wide open, her eyes aglow: "You deceived her!"

He let her go, and gave her such a smack on the face that she fell down beside the wall. But she turned toward him, and, raising herself on her hands, once more shouted: "You deceived her!"

He rushed at her, and, holding her down, struck her as though striking a man. She left off shouting, and began to moan beneath his blows. She no longer stirred, but hid her face against the wall and uttered plaintive cries. He left off beating her and rose up. Then he walked about the room a little to recover his coolness, and, an idea occurring to him, he went and filled a basin with cold water, and dipped his head into it. Then he washed his hands and came back to see what she was doing, carefully wiping his fingers. She had not budged, was still, quietly weeping.

"Are you going to stop blubbering?" he said.

She did not answer. He stood in the middle of the room, feeling somewhat awkward and ashamed in presence of this form stretched out before him. All at once he formed a resolution, and took his hat from the mantelshelf, saying: "Good-night. Give

the key to the doorkeeper when you leave. I shan't wait for your convenience." He went out, closed the door, went to the concierge, and said: "Madame is still there. She will be leaving in a few minutes. Tell the landlord that I give notice to leave at the end of September. It is the sixteenth of August, so I am within the limit."

And he walked hastily away, for he had some pressing calls to make touching the purchase of the last wedding gifts.

The wedding was fixed for the 20th of October, after the meeting of the Chambers. It was to take place at the Church of the Madeleine. There had been a great deal of gossip about it, without any one knowing the exact truth. Different tales were in circulation. It was whispered that an elopement had taken place, but no one was certain about anything. According to the servants, Madame Walter, who would no longer speak to her future son-in-law, had poisoned herself out of rage the very evening the match was decided on, after having taken her daughter off to a convent at midnight. She had been brought back almost dead. Certainly, she would never get over it. She had now the appearance of an old woman; her hair had become quite gray, and she had gone in for religion, taking the sacrament every Sunday.

At the beginning of September, the *Vie Française* announced that the Baron du Roy de Cantel had become editor-in-chief, Monsieur Walter retaining the title of manager. A battalion of well-known writers, reporters, political editors, art and theatrical critics, detached from old important papers by dint of monetary influence, were taken on. The old journalists, the serious and respectable ones, no longer shrggged their shoulders when speaking of

the *Vie Française*. Rapid and complete success had wiped out the contempt of serious writers for the beginnings of this paper.

The marriage of its chief editor was what is styled a Parisian event, George Duroy and the Walters having excited a great deal of curiosity for some time past. All the people who are written about in the papers promised themselves to be there.

The event took place on a bright autumn day.

At eight in the morning, the sight of the staff of the Madeleine stretching a broad red carpet down the lofty flight of steps overlooking the Rue Royale caused passers-by to pause, and announced to the people of Paris that an important ceremony was about to take place. The clerks on the way to their offices, the work girls, the shopmen, paused, looked, and vaguely speculated about the rich folk who spent so much money over getting spliced. Toward ten o'clock idlers began to halt. They would remain for a few minutes, hoping that it would perhaps begin at once, and then move away. At eleven, squads of police arrived and set to work almost immediately to make the crowd move on, as fresh groups formed every moment. The first guests soon made their appearance—those who wanted a good seat so as to see everything. They took the chairs bordering the main aisle. By degrees came others, ladies rustling silks, and serious-looking gentlemen, almost all bald, walking with well-bred air, and graver than usual in this locality.

The church slowly filled. A flood of sunlight entering the huge doorway lit up the front rows of guests.

In the chancel, which looked somewhat gloomy, the altar, laden with tapers, shed a yellow light, pale and insignificant beside the main entrance. People

recognized one another, beckoned to one another, and gathered in groups. The literary men, less respectful than the society men, chatted in low tones and looked at the ladies.

Norbert de Varenne, who was looking out for an acquaintance, perceived Jacques Rival near the centre of the rows of chairs, and joined him. "Well," said he, "the race is to the crafty."

The other, who was not envious, replied: "So much the better for him. His career is made." And they began to point out the people they recognized.

"Do you know what has become of his wife?" asked Rival.

The poet smiled. "Yes, and no. She is living in a very retired style, I am told, in the Montmartre district. But—there is a but—I have noticed for some time past in the *Plume* some political articles terribly like those of Forestier and Duroy. They are by Jean Le Dal, a handsome, intelligent young fellow, of the same breed as our friend George, and who has made the acquaintance of his late wife. From whence I conclude that she had, and always will have, a fancy for beginners. Besides, she is quite well off and continues to wield considerable silent force on the body politic."

Rival observed: "She is not bad-looking. Madeleine is very clever and very sharp. But, tell me, how is it that Duroy comes to be married in church after a divorce?"

Norbert replied: "He is married in church because, in the eyes of the Church, he was not married before."

"How so?"

"Our friend, Bel-Ami, from indifference or economy, thought the registrar sufficient when marrying Madeleine Forestier. He therefore dispensed

with the ecclesiastical benediction of the Holy Mother Church. Consequently, he comes before her to-day as a bachelor, and she lends him all her pomp and ceremony, which will cost Daddy Walter a pretty penny.''

Rival resumed: '' Tell me, my dear fellow, you who go so often to the Walters', is it true that Duroy and Madame Walter never speak to one another now? ''

'' Never. She did not want to give him the girl. But he had a hold, it seems, on the father through skeletons in the house—skeletons connected with the Morocco business. He threatened the old man with frightful revelations. Walter recollected the example he made of Laroche-Mathieu, and gave in at once. But the mother, obstinate like all women, swore that she would never again speak a word to her son-in-law. She looks like a statue, a statue of Vengeance, and he is very uneasy at it, although he puts a good face on the matter, for he knows how to control himself, that fellow does.''

Fellow journalists came up and shook hands with them. Bits of political conversation could be caught.

All at once the beadle struck the pavement trice with the butt of his halberd. Every one turned round with a prolonged rustling of skirts and a moving of chairs. The bride appeared on her father's arm in the bright light of the doorway.

She had still the air of a doll, a charming white doll crowned with orange flowers. She stood for a few moments on the threshold; then, when she made her first step up the aisle, the organ gave forth a powerful note, announcing the entrance of the bride in loud, metallic tones. She advanced with bent head, but not timidly; vaguely moved, pretty, charming, a miniature bride. Madame Walter fol-

lowed them, giving her arm to the father of her other son-in-law, the Marquis de Latour-Yvelin, aged seventy-two. She did not walk, but dragged herself along, ready to faint at each forward movement.

Then George Duroy appeared with an old lady unknown. He, too, kept his head up without turning aside his eyes, fixed and stern under his slightly bent brows. His moustache seemed to bristle on his lip. He was set down as a very good-looking fellow. He had a proud bearing, a good figure and a straight leg. He wore his clothes well, the little red ribbon of the Legion of Honor showing like a drop of blood on his dress coat.

The organ was playing, pouring forth through the immense building the sonorous and rhythmic accents of its glittering throats, which cry aloud unto Heaven the joy or grief of mankind. The great doors were closed, and all at once it became as gloomy as if the sun had just been turned out.

Now, George was kneeling beside his wife in the choir, before the lighted altar. The new Bishop of Tangiers, crozier in hand and mitre on head, made his appearance from the vestry to joint them together in the Eternal name. He put the customary questions, exchanged the rings, uttered the words that bind like chains, and addressed to the newly wedded couple a Christian allocution.

He was declaiming: "You are among the fortunate ones of this world, among the wealthiest and most respected. You, sir, whom your talent raises above others; you who write, who teach, who advise, who guide the people, you have a noble mission to fulfill, a noble example to set."

Duroy listened, intoxicated with pride. A prelate of the Roman Catholic Church was speaking

thus to him. And he felt behind him a crowd, an illustrious crowd, gathered on his account. It seemed to him that some power impelled and lifted him up. He was becoming one of the masters of the world—he, the son of two poor peasants of Canteleu. He saw them all at once in their humble wayside inn, at the summit of the slope, overlooking the broad valley of Rouen, his father and mother, serving the country-folk of the district with drink. He had sent them five thousand francs on inheriting from the Comte de Vaudrec. He would now send them fifty thousand, and they would buy a little estate. They would be satisfied and happy.

The Bishop had finished his harangue.

Bel-Ami, on his knees beside Susan, had bowed his head. He felt at that moment almost a believer, almost religious; full of gratitude toward the Divinity who had thus favored him, who treated him with such consideration. And, without exactly knowing to whom he was addressing himself, he thanked Him for his success.

When the ceremony was concluded he rose up, and, giving his wife his arm, passed into the vestry. Then began the interminable defiling past of the visitors. George, wild with joy, believed himself a king whom a nation had come to acclaim. He shook hands, stammered unmeaning remarks, bowed, and replied: "You are very good to say so."

All at once he caught sight of Madame de Marelle. She drew near, somewhat timid, somewhat uneasy, and held out her hand. He took it in his and retained it. Then he felt the discreet appeal of a woman's fingers, the soft pressure that forgives. And for his own part he squeezed it, that little hand, as though to say: "I still love you."

Their eyes met, smiling, bright. She murmured

in her pleasant voice: "I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again soon, Monsieur."

He replied, gayly: "Soon, Madame."

She passed on. Other people were pushing forward.

The crowd flowed by like a stream. At length it grew thinner. The last guests took leave.

George took Susan's arm in his to pass through the church again. It was full of people, for every one had regained their seats in order to see them pass together. They went by slowly, with calm steps and uplifted heads, their eyes fixed on the wide sun-lit space of the open door. He felt little quiverings run all over his skin, those cold shivers caused by overpowering happiness. He saw no one. His thoughts were solely for himself. When he gained the threshold he saw the crowd collected—a dense, agitated crowd gathered there on his account—on account of George Duroy. The people of Paris were gazing at, and envying, him. Then, raising his eyes, he could see afar off, beyond the Place de la Concorde, the Chambers of Deputies, and it seemed to him that he was going to make one jump from the portico of the Madeleine to that of the Palais Bourbon.

He slowly descended the long flight of steps between two ranks of spectators. But he did not see them; his thoughts had now turned backward, and before his eyes, dazzled by the brilliant sun, there floated the image of Madame de Marelle, re-adjusting before the mirror the little curls on her temples, always disarranged.

MADEMOISELLE PEARL

I

WHAT a strange idea it was for me to choose Mademoiselle Pearl for queen that evening!

Every year I celebrate the Twelfth Night with my old friend Chantal. My father, who was his most intimate friend, used to take me around there when I was a child. I continued the custom, and I doubtless shall continue it as long as I'm alive and as long as there is a Chantal in this world.

The Chantals lead a peculiar existence; they live in Paris as though they were in Grasse, Yvetot, or Pont-à-Mousson.

They have a house with a little garden near the observatory. They live there as though they were in the country. Of Paris, the real Paris, they know nothing at all, they suspect nothing; they are so far, so far away! However, from time to time, they take a trip into it. Madame Chantal goes to

lay in her provisions, as it is called in the family. This is how they go to purchase their provisions:

Mademoiselle Pearl, who has the keys to the kitchen closet (for the linen closets are administered by the mistress herself), Mademoiselle Pearl gives warning that the supply of sugar is low, that the preserves are giving out, that there is not much left in the bottom of the coffee bag. Thus warned against famine, Madame Chantal passes everything in review, taking notes on a pad. Then she puts down a lot of figures and goes through lengthy calculations and long discussions with Mademoiselle Pearl. At last they manage to agree, and they decide upon the quantity of each thing of which they will lay in a three months' provision; sugar, rice, prunes, coffee, preserves, cans of peas, beans, lobster, salt or smoked fish, etc., etc. After which the day for the purchasing is determined upon and they go away in a cab which has room on the top for bundles. They travel over to a big grocer's who keeps his store on the other side of the river in the new sections of the town.

Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Pearl make this trip together, mysteriously, and only return at dinner time, tired out, although still excited, and shaken up by the cab, the roof of which is covered with bundles and bags, like an express wagon.

For the Chantals all that part of Paris situated on the other side of the Seine constitutes the new quarter, a section inhabited by a strange, noisy population, which cares little for honor, spends its days in dissipation, its nights in revelry, and which throws money out of the windows. From time to time, however, the young girls are taken to the Opéra-Comique or the Théâtre Français, when the

play is recommended by the paper which is read by M. Chantal.

At present the young ladies are respectively nineteen and seventeen. They are two pretty girls, tall and fresh, very well brought up, in fact, too well brought up, so much so that they pass by unperceived like two pretty dolls. Never would the idea come to me to pay the slightest attention or to pay court to one of the young Chantal ladies; they are so immaculate that one hardly dares speak to them; one almost feels indecent when bowing to them.

As for the father, he is a charming man, well educated, frank, cordial, but who, above all, likes calm and quiet, and who has thus strongly contributed to the mummifying of his family in order to live as he pleased in a stagnant peacefulness. He reads much, talks with pleasure, and easily grows tender. Lack of contact and of elbowing with the world has made his moral skin very tender and delicate. The slightest thing moves him, excites him, and makes him suffer.

The Chantals have limited connections carefully chosen in the neighborhood. They also exchange two or three yearly visits with relatives who live in the distance.

As for me, I take dinner with them on the fifteenth of August and on the Twelfth Night. That is as much one of my duties as Easter communion is for a Catholic.

On the fifteenth of August a few friends are invited, but at the Twelfth Night I am the only stranger.

II

WELL, this year, as every former year, I went to the Chantals' for my Epiphany dinner.

According to my usual custom, I kissed M. Chantal, Madame Chantal, and Mademoiselle Pearl, and I made a deep bow before the fair Louise and Pauline. I was questioned about a thousand and one things, about what had happened on the boulevards, about politics, about how matters stood in Tong-King, and about our representatives in Parliament. Madame Chantal, a fat lady, whose ideas always give me the impression of being carved out square like building stones, was accustomed to exclaiming at the end of every political discussion: "All that is seed which does not promise much for the future!" Why have I always imagined that Madame Chantal's ideas are square? I don't know; but everything that she says takes that shape in my head: a big square, with four symmetrical angles. There are other people

whose ideas always strike me as being round and rolling like a hoop. As soon as they have begun a sentence on anything it rolls on and runs on, coming out by ten, twenty, fifty round ideas, large and small, which I see rolling along, one behind the other, to the end of the horizon. Other people have pointed ideas . . . but enough of this.

We sat down as usual and finished our dinner without anything out of the ordinary being said. At dessert the Twelfth Night cake was brought on. Now, M. Chantal had been King every year. I don't know whether this was the result of continued chance or a family convention, but he unfailingly found the emblem of dignity in his share of the pastry, and he would proclaim Madame Chantal to be Queen. Therefore, I was greatly surprised to find something very hard, which almost made me break a tooth, in a mouthful of cake. Gently I took this thing from my mouth and I saw that it was a little porcelain doll, no bigger than a bean. Surprise caused me to exclaim: "Ah!" All looked at me, and Chantal clapped his hands and cried: "It's Gaston! It's Gaston! Long live the King! Long live the King!"

All took up the chorus: "Long live the King!" And I blushed to the tip of my ears, as one often does, without any reason at all, in situations which are a little foolish. I sat there looking in my plate, with this absurd little bit of pottery in my fingers, forcing myself to laugh and not knowing what to do or say, when Chantal once more cried out: "Now, you must choose a Queen!"

Then I was thunderstruck. In a second a thousand thoughts and suppositions flashed through my mind. Did they expect me to pick out one of the young Chantal ladies? Was that a trick to make

me say which one I prefer? Was it a gentle, light, direct hint of the parents to a possible marriage? The idea of marriage roams continually in the houses with grown-up girls, and takes every shape and disguise, and employs every subterfuge. A dread of compromising myself took hold of me as well as an extreme timidity before the obstinately correct, reserved attitude of Mademoiselles Louise and Pauline. To choose one of them in preference to the other seemed to me as difficult as choosing between two drops of water; and then the fear of launching myself into an affair which might, in spite of me, lead me gently into matrimonial ties, by means as unassailable and imperceptible and as calm as this insignificant royalty—the fear of all this haunted me.

Suddenly I had an inspiration, and I held out to Mademoiselle Pearl the symbolical emblem. At first every one was surprised, then they doubtless appreciated my delicacy and discretion, for they applauded furiously. Everybody was crying: "Long live the Queen! Long live the Queen!"

As for herself, poor old maid, she was so amazed that she completely lost control of herself; she was trembling and stammering: "No . . . no . . . oh! no . . . not me . . . please . . . not me . . . I beg of you . . ."

Then for the first time in my life I looked at Mademoiselle Pearl and wondered what she was.

I was accustomed to seeing her in this house, just as one sees old upholstered armchairs on which one has been sitting since childhood without ever noticing them. One day, with no reason at all, because a ray of sunshine happens to strike the seat, you suddenly think: "Why, that chair is very curious;" and then you discover that the wood has

been worked by a real artist and that the material is remarkable. I had never taken any notice of Mademoiselle Pearl.

She was a part of the Chantal family, that was all. But how? By what right? She was a tall, thin person who tried to remain in the background, but who was by no means insignificant. She was treated in a friendly manner, better than a housekeeper, not so well as a relative. I suddenly observed several shades of distinction which I had never noticed before. Madame Chantal said: "Pearl." The young ladies: "Mademoiselle Pearl," and Chantal only addressed her as "Mademoiselle," with an air of greater respect, perhaps.

I began to observe her. How old could she be? Forty? Yes, forty. She was not old, she made herself old. I was suddenly struck by this fact. She fixed her hair and dressed in a ridiculous manner, and, notwithstanding all that, she was not in the least ridiculous, she had such simple, natural gracefulness, veiled and hidden. Truly, what a strange creature! How had I never observed her before? She dressed her hair in a grotesque manner, with little old maid's curls, most absurd; but beneath this one could see a large, calm brow, cut by two deep lines, two wrinkles of long sadness, then two blue eyes, large and tender, so timid, so bashful, so humble, two beautiful eyes which had kept the expression of naïve wonder of a young girl, of youthful sensations, and also of sorrow, which had softened without spoiling them.

Her whole face was refined and discreet, a face the expression of which seemed to have gone out without being used up or faded by the fatigues and great emotions of life.

What a dainty mouth! and such pretty teeth!

But one would have thought that she did not dare smile.

Suddenly I compared her to Madame Chantal! Undoubtedly Mademoiselle Pearl was the better of the two, a hundred times better, daintier, prouder, more noble. I was surprised at my observation. They were pouring champagne. I held my glass up to the Queen and, with a well-turned compliment, I drank her health. I could see that she felt like hiding her head in her napkin. Then, as she was dipping her lips in the clear wine, everybody cried: "The Queen drinks! the Queen drinks!" She almost turned purple and choked. Everybody was laughing; but I could see that all loved her.

III

AS soon as dinner was over Chantal took me by the arm. It was time for his cigar, a sacred hour. When alone he would smoke it out in the street; when guests came to dinner he would take them to the billiard room and smoke while playing. That evening they had built a fire to celebrate the Epiphany; my old friend took his cue, a very fine one, and chalked it with great care; then he said:

"You break, my boy!"

He called me "my boy," although I was twenty-five, but he had known me as a young child.

I started the game and made a few caroms. I missed some others, but as the thought of Mademoiselle Pearl kept returning to my mind, I suddenly asked:

"By the way, Monsieur Chantal, is Mademoiselle Pearl a relative of yours?"

Greatly surprised, he stopped playing and looked at me:

"What! Don't you know? Haven't you heard about Mademoiselle Pearl?"

"No."

"Didn't your father ever tell you?"

"No."

"Well, well, that's odd! That certainly is strange! Why, it's a regular adventure!"

He made a pause and then continued:

"And if you only knew how peculiar it is that you should ask me that to-day, on the Twelfth Night!"

"Why?"

"Why? Well, listen. Forty-one years ago to-day, the day of the Epiphany, the following events occurred: We were then living at Roüy-le-Tors, on the ramparts; but for you to understand this I must first explain the house. Roüy is built on a hill, or, rather, on a hump which overlooks a great stretch of prairie. We had a house there with a nice suspended garden held up in the air by the old town walls; therefore the house was in the town, on the street, while the garden overlooked the plains. There was also a door which led out of this garden into the country, at the end of a large secret stairway which descended through the thick walls; it was the kind one reads about in novels. A road passed in front of this door, which was equipped with a big bell, for the peasants, in order to avoid the roundabout way, used to bring up their provisions there.

"You now understand the situation, don't you? Well, this year, at the Epiphany, it had been snowing for a week. One might have thought that the world was coming to an end. When we would go to the ramparts to look over the plain, this immense white, frozen country, which shone like varnish,

would chill our very souls. One might have thought that the Lord had packed the world in cotton to put it in the storeroom for old worlds. I can assure you that it was dreary-looking.

" We were a very numerous family at that time: my father, my mother, my uncle and aunt, my two brothers and four cousins; they were pretty little girls; I married the youngest. Of all that crowd, there are only three of us left: my wife, I, and my sister-in-law, who lives in Marseilles. Zounds! how quickly a family like that dwindles away! I tremble when I think of it! I was fifteen years old then, since I am fifty-six now.

" We were going to celebrate the Epiphany, and we were all happy, very happy! Everybody was in the parlor, awaiting dinner, and my oldest brother, Jacques, said: ' There has been a dog howling out in the plain for about ten minutes; the poor beast must be lost.'

" He had hardly stopped talking when the garden bell began to ring. It had the deep sound of a church bell, which made one think of death. A shiver ran through everybody. My father called the servant and told him to go outside and look. We waited in complete silence; we were thinking of the snow which covered the ground. When the man returned he claimed that he had seen nothing. The dog kept up its ceaseless howling, and the place whence the voice came did not change.

" We sat down to dinner; but we were all moved, especially the young people. Everything went well up to the roast, then the bell began to ring again, three times in succession, three heavy, long strokes which vibrated to the tips of our fingers and which stopped our conversation short. We sat there looking at each other, fork in the air, still

listening, and shaken by a kind of supernatural fear.

"At last my mother spoke: 'It's surprising that they should have waited so long to come back. Do not go alone, Baptiste; one of these gentlemen will accompany you.'

"My Uncle François arose. He was a kind of Hercules, very proud of his strength and who feared nothing in the world. My father said to him: 'Take a gun. There is no telling what it might be.'

"But my uncle only took a cane and went out with the servant.

"We others remained there trembling with fear and anguish, without eating or speaking. My father tried to reassure us: 'Just wait and see,' he said; 'it will be some beggar or some traveler lost in the snow. After ringing once, seeing that the door was not immediately opened, he attempted to find his own way, then, being unable to, he has returned to our door.'

"Our uncle seemed to remain away for an hour. At last he came back, furious, swearing: 'Nothing at all; it's some practical joker! There is nothing but that damned dog howling away at about a hundred yards from the walls. If I had taken a gun I would have killed him to make him keep quiet.'

"We sat down to dinner again, but every one was excited; we felt that all was not over, that something was going to happen, that the bell would soon ring again.

"It rang just as the Twelfth Night cake was being cut. All the men jumped up together. My Uncle François, who had been drinking champagne, swore so furiously that he would murder it, whatever it might be, that my mother and my aunt threw

themselves on him to prevent his going. My father, although very calm and a little helpless (he limped ever since he had broken his leg when thrown by a horse), declared, in turn, that he wished to find out what was the matter and that he was going. My brothers, aged eighteen and twenty, ran to get their guns; and as no one was paying any attention to me I snatched up a little rifle that was used in the garden and got ready to accompany the expedition.

"It left immediately. My father and uncle were walking ahead with Baptiste, who was carrying a lantern. My brothers, Jacques and Paul, followed, and I trailed on behind in spite of the prayers of my mother, who stood in front of the house with her sister and my cousins.

"It had been snowing again for the last hour, and the trees were weighted down. The pines were bending under this heavy, livid garment and looked like enormous white pyramids or sugar cones, and through the gray curtains of small hurrying flakes could be seen the lighter bushes which stood out pale in the shadow. The snow was falling so thick that we could hardly see ten feet ahead of us. But the lantern threw a bright light around us. When we began to go down the winding stairway to the wall I really grew frightened. I felt as though some one were walking behind me, were going to grab me by the shoulders and carry me away, and I felt a strong desire to return; but, as I would have had to cross the garden all alone, I did not dare. I heard some one opening the door leading to the plain; my uncle began to swear again, exclaiming: 'By ——! He has gone again! If I can even catch sight of his shadow, I'll take care not to miss him, the swine!'

" It was a discouraging thing to see this great expanse of plain, or, rather, to feel it before us, for we could not see it; we could only see a thick, endless veil of snow, above, below, opposite us, to the right, to the left, everywhere. My uncle continued: 'Listen! There is the dog howling again; I will teach him how I shoot. That will be something gained, anyhow.'

" But my father, who was kind-hearted, went on: 'It will be much better to go on and get the poor animal, who is crying for hunger. The poor fellow is barking for help; he is calling like a man in distress. Let us go to him.'

" So we started out through this mist, through this thick, continuous fall of snow, which filled the air, which moved, floated, fell, and chilled the skin with a burning sensation like a sharp, rapid pain as each flake melted. We were sinking in to our knees in this soft, cold mass, and we had to pick our legs up very high in order to walk. As we forged ahead the dog's voice became clearer and stronger. My uncle cried: 'Here he is!' We stopped to observe him as one does when he meets an enemy at night.

" I could see nothing, so I ran up to the others, and I caught sight of him; he was frightful and fantastic to see; he was a big black shepherd's dog with long hair and a wolf's head, standing just within reach of our light, shining on the snow. He did not move; he was silently watching us.

" My uncle said: 'That's peculiar, he is neither advancing nor retreating. I feel like taking a shot at him.'

" My father answered in a firm voice: 'No, we must capture him.'

" Then my brother Jacques added: ' But he is not alone. There is something behind him.'

" There was indeed something behind him, something gray, impossible to distinguish. We started out again cautiously. When he saw us approaching the dog sat down and observed us. He did not look upward. In fact, he rather seemed pleased at having been able to attract attention.

" My father went straight to him and petted him. The dog licked his hands. We saw that he was tied to the wheel of a little carriage, a sort of toy carriage entirely wrapped up in three or four woolen blankets. We carefully took off these coverings, and as Baptiste held his lantern to the front of this little vehicle, which looked like a rolling kennel, we saw in it a little baby sleeping peacefully.

" We were so astonished that we couldn't speak. My father was the first to collect his wits, and as he had a warm heart and a broad mind, he stretched his hand over the roof of the carriage and said: ' Poor little waif, you shall be one of us! ' And he ordered my brother Jacques to roll the foundling ahead of us. Thinking out loud, he continued:

" ' Some child of love, whose poor mother rang at my door on this night of Epiphany in memory of the Child of God.'

" He once more stopped and called at the top of his lungs through the night to the four corners of the heavens: ' We have found it! ' Then, putting his hand on his brother's shoulder, he murmured: ' What if you had shot the dog, François? . . .'

" My uncle did not answer, but in the darkness he crossed himself, for, notwithstanding his blustering manner, he was very religious.

" The dog, which had been untied, followed us.

" Ah! Our return to the house was a pleasant

sight! At first we had a lot of trouble in getting the carriage up through the winding stairway; but we succeeded and even rolled it into the vestibule.

"How funny mamma was! How happy and astonished! And my four little cousins (the youngest was only six), they looked like four chickens around a nest. At last we took from the carriage the child, which was still sleeping. It was a girl about six weeks old. And in its clothes we found ten thousand francs in gold—yes, my boy, ten thousand francs!—which papa saved for her dowry. Therefore, it was not a child of poor people, but, perhaps, the offspring of some nobleman with a little shop girl . . . or again . . . we made a thousand suppositions, but we never found out anything. . . . Never the slightest trace. . . . The dog himself was recognized by no one. He was a stranger in the country. At any rate, the person who rang three times at our door must have known my parents well, to have chosen them thus.

"That is how, at the age of six weeks, Mademoiselle Pearl entered the Chantal household.

"It was not until later that she was called Mademoiselle Pearl. She was baptized 'Marie Simonne Claire,' Claire being meant for her family name.

"I can assure you that our return to the dining-room was amusing, with this baby now awake and looking around her at these people and these lights with her vague blue eyes.

"We sat down to dinner again and the cake was cut. I was King, and for Queen I took Mademoiselle Pearl, just as you did to-day. On that day she did not appreciate the honor that was being shown her.

"Well, the child was adopted and brought up in the family. She grew, and the years flew by. She

was so gentle and loving and minded so well that every one would have spoiled her abominably had not my mother prevented it.

"My mother was an orderly woman with a great respect for class distinction. She consented to treat little Claire as her own sons, but, nevertheless, she wished the distance which separated us to be well marked and the situation well established. Therefore, as soon as the child could understand, she acquainted her with her story and gently, even tenderly, impressed on the little one's mind that, for the Chantals, she was an adopted daughter, taken in, but, nevertheless, a stranger. Claire understood the situation with peculiar intelligence and with surprising instinct; she knew how to take the place which was left her, and to keep it with so much tact, gracefulness, and gentleness that she often brought tears to my father's eyes. My mother herself was often so moved by the passionate gratefulness and timid devotion of this dainty and loving little creature that she began calling her: 'My daughter.' At times, when the little one had done something kind and good, my mother would raise her spectacles on her forehead, a thing which always indicated emotion with her, and she would repeat: 'This child is a pearl, a perfect pearl!' This name stuck to the little Claire, who became and remained for us Mademoiselle Pearl."

IV

MONTCHANTAL stopped. He sat down on the edge of the billiard table, his feet hanging, and he was playing with a ball with his left hand, while with his right one he fingered a rag which served to rub the chalk marks from the slate. A little red in the face, his voice thick, he was talking away for himself now, lost in his memories, gently drifting through the old scenes and events which awoke in his mind, just as we walk through old family gardens where we were brought up and where each tree, each walk, each hedge reminds us of some occurrence.

I stood opposite him, leaning against the wall, my hands resting on my idle cue.

After a slight pause he continued:

"By Jove! She was pretty at eighteen . . . and graceful . . . and perfect. . . . Ah! She was so sweet . . . and good and true . . . and charming! . . . She had such eyes . . . blue

. . . transparent . . . clear. . . . Such eyes as I have never seen since!"

He was once more silent. I asked: "Why did she never marry?"

He answered, not to me, but to the word "marry" which had caught his ear: "Why? why? She never would . . . she never would. She had a dowry of thirty thousand francs, and she received several offers . . . but she never would! She seemed sad at that time. That was when I married my cousin, little Charlotte, my wife, to whom I had been engaged for six years."

I looked at M. Chantal, and it seemed to me that I was looking into his very soul, that I was suddenly witnessing one of these humble and cruel tragedies of honest, straightforward, faultless hearts, one of those unacknowledged and unexplored dramas which nobody has known, not even the silent and resigned victims. A bold curiosity suddenly impelled me to exclaim:

"*You* should have married her, Monsieur Chantal!"

He started, looked at me, and said:

"I? Marry whom?"

"Mademoiselle Pearl."

"Why?"

"Because you loved her more than your cousin."

He stared at me with strange, round, bewildered eyes and stammered:

"I loved her . . . I? . . . How? Who told you that? . . ."

"Of course! That's easily seen . . . and it's even on account of her that you delayed for so long your marriage with your cousin who had been waiting for you for six years."

He dropped the ball which he was holding in his left hand, and, seizing the chalk rag in both hands, he buried his face in it and began to sob. He was weeping with his eyes, nose, and mouth in a heart-breaking yet ridiculous manner, like a sponge which one squeezes. He was coughing, spitting, and blowing his nose in the chalk rag, wiping his eyes and sneezing; then the tears would again begin to flow down the wrinkles on his face and he would make a strange gurgling noise in his throat. I felt bewildered, ashamed; I wanted to run away, and I no longer knew what to say, do, or attempt.

Suddenly Madame Chantal's voice sounded throughout the building: "Haven't you men almost finished smoking your cigars?"

I opened the door and cried: "Yes, Madame, we are coming right down."

Then I rushed to her husband, and, seizing him by the shoulders, I cried: "Monsieur Chantal, my friend Chantal, listen to me; your wife is calling; pull yourself together, we must go downstairs."

He stammered: "Yes . . . yes . . . I am coming . . . poor girl! . . . I am coming . . . tell her that I am coming."

He began conscientiously to wipe his face on the cloth which, for the last two or three years, had been used for marking off the chalk from the slate; then he appeared, half white and half red, his forehead, nose, cheeks, and chin covered with chalk, and his eyes swollen, still full of tears.

I caught him by the hands and dragged him into his bedroom, muttering: "I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon, Monsieur Chantal, for having caused you much sorrow . . . but . . . I did not know . . . you . . . you understand."

He squeezed my hand, saying: "Yes . . . yes . . . there are difficult moments . . ."

Then he plunged his face into a bowl of water. When he emerged from it he did not yet seem to me to be presentable; but I thought of a little stratagem. As he was growing worried, looking at himself in the mirror, I said to him: "All you have to do is to say that a little dust flew into your eye and you can cry before everybody to your heart's content."

He went downstairs rubbing his eyes with his handkerchief. All were worried; each one wished to look for the speck, which could not be found; and stories were told of similar cases where it had been necessary to call in a physician.

I went over to Mademoiselle Pearl and watched her, tormented by an ardent curiosity, which was turning to positive suffering. She must indeed have been pretty, with her gentle, calm eyes, so large that it looked as though she never closed them like other mortals. Her gown was a little ridiculous, a real old maid's gown, which was unbecoming without appearing clumsy.

It seemed to me as though I were looking into her soul, just as I had been into Monsieur Chantal's, that I was looking right from one end to the other of this humble life, so simple and devoted. I felt an irresistible need of questioning her, to find out whether she, too, had loved him, whether she also had suffered as he had from this long, secret, poignant grief, which one cannot see, know, or guess, but which oozes out at night in the loneliness of the dark room. I was watching her, and I could observe her heart beating under her waist, and I wondered whether this sweet, candid face had wept on the soft pillow and sobbed

with her whole body shaken by the violence of her anguish.

I said to her in a low voice, like a child who is breaking a toy to see what is inside: "If you could have seen Monsieur Chantal crying a while ago it would have moved you."

She started, asking: "What? He was weeping?"

"Ah, yes, he was indeed weeping!"

"Why?"

She seemed deeply moved. I answered:

"On your account."

"On my account?"

"Yes. He was telling me how much he had loved you in the days gone by; and what a pang it had given him to marry his cousin instead of you . . ."

Her pale face seemed to grow a little longer; her calm eyes, which always remained open, suddenly closed so quickly that they seemed shut forever. She slipped from her chair to the floor, and slowly, gently sank down as would a fallen garment.

I cried: "Help! help! Mademoiselle Pearl is ill."

Madame Chantal and her daughters rushed forward, and while they were looking for towels, water, and vinegar, I grabbed my hat and ran away.

I walked away with rapid strides, my heart heavy, my mind full of remorse and regrets. And yet sometimes I felt pleased; I felt as though I had done a praiseworthy and necessary act. I was asking myself: "Did I do wrong or right?" They had that shut up in their hearts, just as some people carry a bullet in a closed wound. Will they not be happier now? It was too late for their torture

to begin over again and soon enough for them to remember it with tenderness.

And perhaps some evening next spring, moved by a beam of moonlight falling through the branches on the grass at their feet, they will join and press their hands in memory of all this cruel and smothered suffering; and perhaps also this short embrace may infuse in their veins a little of this thrill which they would not have known without it, and will give to those two dead souls, resurrected in a second, the rapid and divine sensation of this intoxication, of this madness which gives to lovers more happiness in an instant than other men can gather during a whole lifetime!

IN THE SUNLIGHT

LIFE, so brief, and yet so long, sometimes becomes unbearable. It rolls along, always the same, with death at the end. We can neither stop, change nor understand it. Often a feeling of indignant revolt comes over us when we perceive the uselessness of all our efforts. Whatever we may do, we die! Whatever we believe, think, attempt, we die. It seems as though we were to die to-morrow without knowing anything, although heartsick with the knowledge which we have already gained. Then we feel crushed under the sentiment of "the eternal misery of everything," with human powerlessness and the monotony of our actions.

We rise, walk, lean at our window. Opposite us the people are breakfasting, just as they did yesterday, just as they will to-morrow: father, mother, four children. Three years ago the grandmother was still there; then she died. Since we have been neighbors, the father has changed a good deal. He does not notice it; he seems contented, happy. Fool!

They talk of a wedding, then of a death, of the tender chicken which they are eating, of their servant who is dishonest. They worry over a thousand useless and foolish things. Fools!

The sight of the apartment in which they have been living for eighteen years fills me with disgust and indignation. That is life! Four walls, two doors, one window, a bed, some chairs, a table! A prison! Any place in which one lives for a long time becomes a prison! Oh! to flee, to leave, to escape from the well known places, the men, the same actions at the same hours, and above all the same thoughts!

When you are weary enough to cry from morning until night, so weary that you no longer have the strength to reach for a glass of water, tired of the friendly faces which have become irritating because they have been seen so often, sick of the odious and calm neighbors, of the familiar and monotonous objects, of your house, of your street, of your maid who comes to say: "What will Monsieur have for dinner?" and who turns away kicking up at each step the ragged edge of her dirty petticoat; when you become weary of your too faithful dog, of the unchanging designs of your hangings, of the regularity of your meals, of sleeping in the same bed, of every action repeated each day, weary even of yourself, of your own voice, of the things which you continually repeat, of the narrow field of your ideas, sick of the sight of your face in the mirror, of your expression when you shave or brush your hair—then it is time to leave, to enter into a new and changing life.

Travel is a kind of door through which we leave the known reality in order to penetrate into an unexplored reality, which seems like a dream. A station! A seaport! A train which whistles with its first escape of steam! A great steamer slowly passing the jetties in order to rush across the seas toward

new countries! Who can see that without trembling with envy, without feeling a thrill of longing for distant travels?

We all dream of some favorite country, some of Sweden, others of India; one person likes Greece and another Japan. I felt attracted to Africa by an imperious need, by a longing for the unknown desert, like a presentiment of incipient passion.

I left Paris on the 6th of July, 1881. I wished to see this land of sunlight and of sand in midsummer, under the oppressive heat, in the blinding glory of light.

Everyone knows the magnificent verses of the great poet Leconte de Lisle:

> "Midi, king of the summers, spread o'er the plain,
> Drop in silv'ry sheets from the heavens above.
> All is silent. The breathless air is aflame,
> The earth is slumb'ring in its fiery robe."

This is the *midi* of the desert, spread over the motionless and unlimited ocean of sand, which made me leave the blossoming banks of the Seine of which Madame Deshoulières sings, the fresh morning baths and the green shade of the woods, in order to cross the burning solitudes.

There was another cause which attracted me at this time especially to Algiers. The elusive Bou-Amama was carrying on that fantastical campaign which caused so many foolish things to be said and done. It was also claimed that the Mussulman population was preparing for a general insurrection, that it was going to make a last effort, and that, immediately after the Ramadan, war would break out simultaneously throughout Algiers. I became extremely curious to see the Arab at this time, to

attempt to understand his soul, a thing of which the colonists never think.

Flaubert would sometimes say: "One can imagine the desert, the pyramids, the Sphinx, without ever having seen them; but what one can not imagine is the expression of a Turkish barber squatting before his door."

Would it not be even more interesting to know what is going on in his mind?

THE SEA

MARSEILLES is throbbing under the gay sun of a summer's day. It seems to smile with its great flag-bedecked cafés, its horses covered with straw hats as though dressed for a masquerade, its busy and noisy inhabitants. Everywhere is heard that accent which seems to be uttered as a challenge. In other places a native of Marseilles is amusing and seems to be a kind of foreigner murdering the French language; in Marseilles a combination of accents gives to it a sound which is truly farcical. To hear everyone talking like that is really too much! In the sunlight Marseilles perspires and smells of garlic and countless other things. It smells of the unnamable foods at which nibble negroes, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Maltese, Spaniards, English, Corsicans, and even the inhabitants of Marseilles lying down, sitting or idling by the wharves.

In the Joliette basin heavy steamers, their noses turned toward the entrance of the harbor and covered with men who are loading them with cargo, are getting up steam.

One of them, the *Abd-el-Kader,* suddenly begins to bellow, for the whistle no longer exists; it has been replaced by something which sounds like the roar of a wild beast, a frightful voice which comes from the smoking belly of the monster.

The great vessel leaves its anchorage, slowly passes between its motionless mates, leaves the harbor, and quickly, as the captain calls through the speaking-tube his order: "Full speed ahead," it eagerly bounds forward, opens up the sea, leaving behind it a long wake, while the coasts disappear and Marseilles sinks behind the horizon.

It is dinner-time on board. There are very few passengers, for not many people care to go to Africa in July. At the end of the table there is a colonel, an engineer, a physician, and two merchants from Algiers with their wives.

The conversation turns to the country for which we are bound and of the government which best suits it. The colonel energetically commends a military government, discusses desert tactics and declares that telegraphy is useless and even dangerous for armies. This enlightened officer must have been the victim of some misfortune of war caused by telegraph. The engineer would like to see the colony confided to the care of a bridge and road inspector who would build canals, dams, roads and a thousand other things. The captain of the ship, in a witty way, suggests that a sailor would be much more suitable for the position, as Algiers is only accessible from the sea. The two merchants point out some glaring faults of the present government; everyone laughs and wonders how a person can be so stupid. Then all go up on deck. Nothing is to be seen but the calm sea without a ripple, shimmering

under the silvery moon. The heavy vessel seems to fly over it, leaving behind a long, boiling wake, where the bubbling water seems turned to liquid fire.

The bluish-black sky stretches over our heads, dotted with stars hidden for an instant behind the enormous volume of smoke which is issuing from our funnels; the little signal at the top of the mast looks like a large star moving among the others. Nothing can be heard but the muffled roaring of the machinery in the depths of the vessel.

How charming are the peaceful evening hours on the deck of a speeding steamer!

We spend the following day dreaming under the wide awning, with the sea on all sides. Then night comes back and is again followed by day. We have slept in the narrow cabin, on a berth which is shaped like a coffin. It is four o'clock in the morning, and we must be up.

What an awakening! A long coast, and in the distance, opposite us, a white spot which grows—it is Algiers!

ALGIERS

UNEXPECTED fairyland which delights the soul! Algiers surpassed my expectations. How pretty is this snow-white city under the dazzling light! An immense terrace follows the harbor, supported by graceful arcades. Above it rise the big European hotels and the French quarter; still above this stretches the Arab city with its strange little white houses, built one right up against the other and separated by streets which resemble lighted tunnels. The upper floor is supported by posts painted in white; the roofs touch. There are abrupt descents into habitations which are no more than holes, mysterious stairways toward dwellings which look like burrows full of swarming Arab families. A woman passes by, serious and veiled, with bare ankles covered with dust which has accumulated over the perspiration and which are by no means tempting.

From the end of the pier the view of the city is marvelous. You look with ecstasy at this splendid cascade of houses, which seem to tumble one over the other from the heights of the mountains clear down to the sea. It reminds one of the foam from a torrent, but of a dazzling whiteness; and from place to

place a snowy mosque shining in the sunlight appears like a big bubble.

Everywhere swarms a remarkable population. Countless vagabonds go about dressed in nothing but a shirt, or in two carpets sewed together in the shape of a chasuble, or in an old bag with holes cut out for the head and arms; always barelegged and barefooted, swearing and fighting, covered with vermin, ragged and smelling like beasts. Tartarin would say that they smell of the Turk, for here everything smells of the Turk.

Here there is a whole world of black-skinned youngsters, half-caste Arabs, negroes and whites, a perfect ant-hill of shoe-shiners, as bothersome as flies, thieving and bold, vicious at three years of age, as mischievous as monkeys, who insult you in their native tongue and pursue you with their eternal cry of "Shine, Monsieur!" I might mention that the Parisian coachmen can find themselves outdone in familiarity here.

The very day of my arrival I saw a little incident without any importance and yet which practically sums up the history of Algeria and of colonization.

While I was sitting before a café a young negro forcibly seized my feet and began to blacken my boots with a furious energy. After he had rubbed and polished for about half an hour and made the leather shine like a mirror, I gave him two sous. He thanked me, but did not get up. He remained squatting between my legs, quite motionless, and rolling his eyes as though he were sick. I said: "Run along." He did not answer or move; then, suddenly, snatching up his shoe-box in both arms he started to run as fast as his legs could carry him. I saw a big negro of about sixteen leave a doorway where he had been

hiding and pounce on the little fellow. In a few bounds he had caught up with him, then he slapped him, searched him, snatched away his two sous which he stuffed into his pocket and quietly walked away laughing, while the poor youngster bellowed in a heart-breaking manner.

I was indignant. My neighbor at table, an officer of the African Division, who was a friend, said: "Leave them alone, it is simply hierarchy establishing itself. As long as they are not strong enough to take money from the others, they shine shoes. But as soon as they feel themselves able to whip the smaller ones, they do nothing at all. They watch those who are blacking shoes and then rob them." Then my companion added, laughing: "Almost everybody here does the same thing."

The European quarter of Algiers, pretty from a distance, has, when seen from near, the appearance of a new city built in a climate to which it is not suited. On landing, a large sign meets your eye: "Algerian Skating Rink;" and at the first few steps one is overcome, one is seized with the sensation of the misapplied progress of the country, of the brutal, awkward civilization, so little adapted to the customs, climate and people. It is we who appear to be barbarians among these barbarians; brutes though they may be, they are at home, and centuries have taught them the customs of which we do not even seem to have grasped the meaning as yet.

Napoleon III said a wise word (perhaps whispered to him by a minister): "What Algeria needs is not conquerors, but initiators." But we have only remained brutal, clumsy conquerors infatuated with our ready-made ideas. Our morals, Parisian houses, customs, offend like glaring faults in art, wisdom

and understanding. Everything that we do seems wrong, a challenge to this country, not so much to the natives as to the land itself.

A few days after my arrival I saw an open-air ball at Mustapha. It was just like the Neuilly fair. Gingerbread booths, shooting-galleries, lotteries, somnambulists, clerks dancing the regular Bullier quadrille with shop-girls, while behind the enclosure to which admission was charged, in the broad and sandy drilling field, hundreds of Arabs lay under the moon, motionless in their rags, gravely listening to the noisy choruses of the tunes to which the French people danced.

THE PROVINCE OF ORAN

TO go from Algiers to Oran takes a day on the train. At first one crosses the plain of the Mitidja, fertile, shady and populous. This is what is shown to the new arrival in order to prove to him the fertility of our colony. Certainly Mitidja and Kabylia are two admirable countries. In fact, Kabylia has a greater population to the square mile than Calais; Mitidja will soon be the same. What can one wish to develop there? But I am straying from my subject.

The train rolls forward; the cultivated fields disappear; the ground becomes bare and red—typical African soil. The horizon stretches out, sterile and burning. We follow the immense valley of Chelif, inclosed in great gray, desolate mountains, without a tree or a blade of grass. From time to time the mountains grow lower and open up as though better to show the frightful poverty of the soil, burned by the sun. An unlimited flat area stretches out, bounded in the distance by the almost

invisible heights which mingle with the horizon. At intervals on the barren peaks appear great round, white spots, like the eggs of some giant bird. They are the *marabouts* erected to the glory of Allah.

From time to time on the boundless yellow plain one sees a clump of trees and near them men standing about, tall, sunburned Europeans who are watching the train pass by; near them are little tents like big mushrooms, from which rush bearded soldiers. It is a hamlet of farmers protected by a detachment of infantry.

Along this stretch of sterile and dusty soil we can sometimes distinguish, far away in the distance, a kind of smoke, a light cloud which rises toward the sky and moves along the ground. It is a horseman whose mount is raising the fine burning dust with his hoofs. Each one of these clouds on the plain indicates a man whose almost imperceptible white burnous we at last manage to distinguish.

From time to time we come upon native encampments. We can hardly perceive these villages, established near a dried-up stream, where children lead a few goats, sheep or cows to pasture (to use the word "pasture" is truly a mockery). The brown canvas tents, surrounded by dried bushes, mingle with the monotonous color of the land. On the railroad embankment a dark-skinned man with bare, muscular and calfless legs, wrapped in whitish rags, gravely contemplates the iron steed which rushes past him. Farther on we see a group of nomads on the march. The caravan advances slowly in the dust, leaving a cloud behind it. The women and children are riding asses or small horses, and a few horsemen proceed silently in the lead, with a haughty and noble gait.

It is the same all the way along. When the train stops, about every hour, a European village appears: a few houses like those to be seen at Nanterre or Rueil; parched trees, of which one bears the blue, white and red flag in honor of the Fourteenth of July; before the gate stands a silent gendarme, exactly like the one at Rueil or Nanterre.

The heat is intolerable. It becomes impossible to touch any metal object, even in the car. The water from the gourds is hot. The air which rushes through the window seems to have been blown from the door of the furnace. At Orléansville the thermometer registers over 100° in the shade.

We get to Oran for dinner. It is a regular commercial European city, more Spanish than French, and with nothing of any special interest. In the streets one sees beautiful girls with black eyes, ivory skin and pearly teeth. When the weather is clear, it seems that on can see, away off on the horizon, the coast of Spain, their fatherland.

As soon as one puts foot on this African soil, a strange desire overcomes one—that of going farther to the south. So I bought a ticket to Saïda, and took the narrow-gauge little railroad which climbs up on the heights. Around this city roams the elusive Bou-Amama with his horsemen.

After a few hours' travel one reaches the first slopes of the Atlas range. The train goes up puffing, barely moving; it winds around the side of the arid hill, passes beside an immense lake formed by three rivers, whose water is held in by the famous Hebra dam. An immense wall, sixteen hundred feet long, holds back, over an enormous plain, forty-six million cubic feet of water.

This dam gave way the following year, drowning

hundreds of men and ruining an entire country. This happened at the time of a great national subscription for some Hungarian or Spanish flood victims. Nobody took any notice of this French disaster.

We then pass through narrow gorges between two mountains which look as though they had recently been burned, they are so red and bare; we travel around mountains, skirt along the slopes, go miles out of our way in order to avoid obstacles and then rush down at full speed into a plain, still zig-zagging a little, as though through force of habit.

The cars are small and the engine as big as that of a street railway. At times it seems worn out, puffs, chokes or sputters, goes along so slowly that one can easily follow it on foot and then suddenly starts off again madly.

The whole countryside is barren and desolate. The King of Africa, the Sun, this great and ferocious ravager, has eaten out the heart of these valleys, leaving only stones and a red dust in which nothing can grow.

Saïda is a little town in the French style which seems to be inhabited only by generals. There are at least ten or twelve of them there, and they always seem to be holding some kind of a meeting. One feels like crying to them: "Where is Bou-Amama today, General?" The civilian population has absolutely no respect for the uniform.

The inn leaves much to be desired. I lie down on a straw mattress in a white-washed room. The heat is intolerable. I close my eyes and try to sleep. Alas! my window opens on a little courtyard. I hear the dogs barking. They are far, very far away. They seem to be talking to each other. But soon they come nearer; they are up to the houses now,

among the vines, in the streets. There are five hundred, perhaps a thousand starving, ferocious dogs who watch the Spanish encampments on the heights. Once their master is killed or gone, the beasts roam around, dying of hunger; then they find the city, and they surround it like an army. During the day they sleep in the ravines, under the rocks in the caves in the mountains, and as soon as night falls they invade Saïda to search for food.

Men who come home late at night walk along with a revolver in their hands, followed and preceded by twenty or thirty yellow dogs like foxes.

They bark continuously in a frightful manner, enough to make one crazy. Then other noises are heard, the shrill yapping of the jackals which are arriving; and at times only one loud, peculiar voice can be heard, that of the hyena, imitating the bark of the dog in order to attract and devour him. This awful uproar lasts until daybreak.

Before the arrival of the French, Saïda had been protected by a little fortress erected by Abd-el-Kader. The new town is in a sort of bowl surrounded by bald rocky heights. A narrow river, across which one can almost hop, waters the neighboring fields, in which grow beautiful vineyards. To the south the neighboring mountains resemble a wall; these are the last steps leading to the high table-land. To the left rises a brilliant red rock, about a hundred and fifty feet high, with the ruins of some masonry on its summit. This is all that is left of the Saïda built by Abd-el-Kader. Seen from the distance, this rock seems to cling to the mountain; but if one climbs it, one remains speechless from surprise and admiration. A deep ravine separates this ancient fortress from the neighboring mountain.

This mountain is of reddish stone and broken, in places, by cracks where the winter rain falls. In the ravine the stream flows amid bushes of pink laurel. From above it looks like an Oriental carpet spread along a corridor. The carpet of flowers seems uninterrupted, spotted only from place to place by the green foliage which rises above the flowers.

One descends into this valley by a path used by goats.

The stream, called a river there (the Oued-Saïda) —for us a mere brook—ripples along the stones under the blossoming bushes, strikes against the rocks, foams, undulates and babbles. The water is warm, almost burning. Enormous crabs run along the banks with a strange speed, their claws open as soon as they see me. Great green lizards disappear among the leaves. At times a snake glides between the rocks.

The ravine grows narrow, as though it were going to close. A great noise above my head makes me start. An eagle, surprised, flies away from its nest, rises toward the blue sky with slow, strong motions of his wings, which seem to touch both sides of the gorge.

After about an hour one reaches the road which climbs the dusty mountain toward Aïn-el-Hadjar.

Before me plodded a bent old woman in a black skirt and white cap, carrying a basket on her left arm and in her right hand an immense red umbrella, in guise of a parasol. A woman in this country! A peasant in this mournful land where one hardly sees anything but the tall, well-built negress, covered with yellow, red or blue rags, and who leaves in her wake an odor of human flesh strong enough to upset the strongest stomachs!

Exhausted, the old woman sat down in the dust, panting from the torrid heat. Her face was crossed by countless little wrinkles such as one sees on a piece of crumpled cloth; her look was weary, depressed and desperate.

I spoke to her. She was an Alsatian who had been sent with her four sons to this desolate country after the war. She asked me:

"Do you come from over there?"

That "over there" made me sad. I answered: "Yes."

She began to weep. Then she told me her simple little story.

They had been promised some land; and mother and children had come to this country. Now three of her sons were dead as a result of this murderous climate. The remaining one was sick, their fields, although large, yielded nothing, for they did not get a drop of water. She kept repeating: "Ashes, Monsieur, burnt ashes. We don't even get a cabbage, not a single cabbage!" She clung to that idea of a cabbage, which, for her, seemed to be the symbol of terrestrial happiness.

I have never seen anything more pitiful than this old Alsatian woman cast away in this burning land of fire, where not even a single cabbage could grow. How often she must have thought of the old country, the green land of her youth, the poor old soul!

On leaving me, she inquired: "Do you know whether they are going to give out any lands in Tunisia? They say that the country is good over there. It would be better than here, anyhow. And then perhaps I might save my boy."

All our colonists who have settled on the other side of the Tell might say about the same thing.

I felt a strong desire to continue farther. But the whole country was at war and I could not venture farther alone. A chance was offered me. A train was leaving to carry provisions to the troops encamped along the salt lakes.

It was a day when the sirocco was blowing. Since morning the south wind had been crossing the country in slow, heavy, devouring gusts. At seven o'clock the little convoy started out, taking along two detachments of infantry with their officers, three cistern-cars full of water and the engineers of the company, as, for the last three weeks, no train had been able to reach the end of the line, part of which the Arabs were able to destroy.

The engine, " the Hyena," starts up noisily and heads straight for the mountain as though it wished to run right through it. Then suddenly it makes a sharp curve, enters a narrow little valley, turns again and comes back, a hundred and fifty feet above the place where it had just been running. It turns again and continues up the mountain, zig-zagging and unfolding like a great ribbon until it gains the top of the mountain.

Here we find vast buildings, factory chimneys, a kind of abandoned city. They are magnificent factories of the Franco-Algerian Company. It is here that the alfalfa was prepared, before the massacre of the Spaniards. This place is called Aïn-el-Hadjar.

We continue upward. The engine puffs, groans, slows down and stops. Three times it tries to start again, three times it remains powerless. It backs up in order to get a start, but once more it stops without strength in the middle of a too steep hill.

Then the officers order the soldiers to get out and

push the train. We start up again slowly, at the speed of a man walking. All are laughing and joking; the infantrymen are making fun of the engine. At last it is all over. We are now on the high tablelands.

The engineer, leaning out of the window, keeps his eye to the track, which might at any minute be cut; we others are attentively watching the horizon, alert as soon as the slightest cloud of dust appears which might indicate a still invisible horseman. We are carrying rifles and revolvers.

At times a jackal runs by us; an enormous vulture flies away, abandoning the carcass of a camel almost entirely consumed; wild hens, which look very much like partridge, hide in the clumps of dwarf palms.

At the little station of Tafraoua two companies of infantry are at camp. Many Spaniards had been killed here.

At Kralfallah we find a company of zouaves hurriedly building up a defence, strengthening it with rails, beams, telegraph posts, bags of alfalfa, anything that they can find. We have luncheon here; and the three officers, all three young and gay, the captain, first and second lieutenant, offer us coffee.

The train starts again. It runs along endlessly through an unlimited plain to which tufts of alfalfa give the appearance of a calm sea. The sirocco becomes intolerable, fanning our faces with the burning air of the desert. At times a vague form appears on the horizon. It looks like a lake, an island, rocks in the water; it is a mirage. On a little slope we see some blackened stones and some human bones: the remains of a Spaniard. Then we see some more dead camels, all of them being eaten by the vultures.

We cross a forest. What a forest! An ocean of sand where occasional clumps of juniper trees look like heads of salad in a gigantic vegetable garden. After that we no longer see any green except the alfalfa, which grows in round tufts and covers the ground as far as one can see.

At times we think we see a horseman in the distance, but he disappears; perhaps we were mistaken.

We arrive at Oued-Fallette, which is in the middle of this gloomy and deserted stretch of land. Then I start out walking with two companions, still going southward. We climb a low hill in a scorching heat. The sirocco sheds fire; it dries the perspiration on the face as soon as it appears, burns the lips and the eyes, dries the throat. Under every stone we find scorpions.

Around the motionless convoy, which from the distance looks like a great black beast crouching on the parched ground, the soldiers are loading wagons which have been sent from the neighboring encampment. Then they move away in the dust, slowly, with a weary step, under the burning sun. We watch them for a long, long time as they plod along, and finally we can see only the gray cloud which rises over them.

Six of us now remain near the train. We can no longer touch anything; everything burns. The brass trimmings of the cars seem to have been reddened by fire. We let out a cry of pain if we happen to touch the barrel of a gun.

A few days ago the tribe of Rezaïna went over to the rebels and crossed the salt lake which we had been unable to reach, as we were forced to turn back. The heat had been so intense as the fugitive tribe crossed this dried-up swamp that all their mules died from thirst, as well as sixteen children who passed away in their mothers' arms.

The engine whistles. We leave Oued Fallette. A strange occurrence made this place famous at this time.

A post was established there, guarded by the 15th Infantry. Well, one night, two Arabs, who had ridden ten hours to carry a message from the commanding general at Saïda, arrived at the outposts. According to the custom, they waved a torch in order to make themselves known. The sentinel, a recruit fresh from France, ignorant of the rules and customs and who had not been informed by his superiors, fired at the messengers. The poor devils advanced, nevertheless; the whole post runs to arms; the men take their positions and a terrible fusillade begins. After about a hundred and fifty shots, the two Arabs finally retreat, one of them with a bullet in his shoulder. The following day they returned to headquarters, bringing with them their despatches.

BOU-AMAMA

IT would be a clever man who could say even to-day exactly who or what was Bou-Amama. This elusive joker, after harassing our African division, disappeared so completely that people are beginning to doubt whether he actually existed.

Trustworthy officers, who believed that they knew him, described him to me; but other no less truthful people, sure of having seen him, depicted him in an entirely different manner.

At any rate, this prowler was only the head of a small band of men, probably driven to revolt by starvation. These men only fought to rob farms or to pillage convoys. They seemed to have been moved neither by hatred nor by religious fanaticism, but by hunger. Our method of colonization being to ruin the Arabs, to rob them without cease, to pursue them without mercy, to make them die of misery, we shall see many more insurrections.

Perhaps another cause for this campaign is the presence of Spanish cultivators on the high plateau.

In this ocean of alfalfa, in this desolate green stretch, motionless under the burning sky, lived a veritable nation, hordes of brown-skinned men, ad-

venturers whom misery or other reasons had driven from their fatherland. More savage, more feared than the Arabs, isolated, far from any city, law or force, they acted, it is said, as did their forefathers in a new country; they were violent, bloodthirsty, terrible to the primitive people. The vengeance of the Arabs was fearful. Here, in a few lines, is the apparent origin of the revolt.

Two Mussulman priests were openly preaching revolt in a southern tribe. Lieutenant Weinbrunner was sent out against them with the mission of capturing the chief of this tribe. The French officer had an escort of four men. He was murdered.

Colonel Innocenti was commanded to avenge this death and he was given the assistance of the agha of Saïda.

On the road the followers of the agha met the Trafis, who were also on their way to join Colonel Innocenti. Quarrels arose between the two tribes; the Trafis turned around and went over to Bou-Amama. It is here that occurred the affairs of Chellala, which has already been told many times. After his convoy had been sacked, Colonel Innocenti, who seems to have been accused by public sentiment, returned to Kreïder by forced marches in order to get reënforcements, thus leaving the road entirely clear to his adversaries, who took advantage of the fact.

Let me mention a strange fact. On the same day official despatches reported Bou-Amama at the same time in two different places about a hundred miles apart.

This chief, profiting by the liberty which had been given him, passed within five miles of Géryville. On the way he killed Brigadier Bringeard, who had been sent out into a rebellious country with only a few

men in order to establish telegraphic communications; then he proceeded northward.

He then crossed the territory of the Hassassenas and of the Harrars, and actually gave the command to these two tribes for the general massacre of the Spaniards which they were to carry out shortly afterward.

At last he arrived at Aïn-Kétifa, and two days later he was camping at Haci-Tirsine, only ten miles from Saïda.

The military authorities at last becoming disturbed, on the evening of the tenth of June warned the Franco-Algerian Company to call in all its agents, as the country was not safe. Trains ran all night to the extreme limit of the line; but it was impossible in a few hours to gather in all the cultivators spread over a territory of a hundred miles, and on the eleventh, at daybreak, the massacres began.

They were carried out principally by the two tribes, the Hassassenas and the Harrars, who were exasperated at seeing the Spaniards live on their lands. . . . .

And yet, on the pretext of not wishing to incite them to rebellion, nothing was done to these two tribes who massacred almost three hundred people—men, women and children. Arab horsemen found loaded with spoils, with the dresses of Spanish women hidden under their saddles, were released, it is said, on pretext that proofs were lacking. So, on the evening of the tenth, Bou-Amama was camping at Haci-Tirsine, twenty-two miles from Saïda. At the same time General Cérez was telegraphing to the governor that the rebel chief was trying to return south.

During the following days the bold marabout pillaged the villages of Tafraoua and of Kralfallah, loading down his camels with spoils, carrying away several million francs' worth of provisions and merchandise.

Once more he returned to Haci-Tirsine in order to reorganize his troop; then he divided his convoy in two parts, one of which went toward Aïn-Kétifa. There it was stopped and pillaged by the *goum* of Sharraouï (*division Brunetière*).

The other section, commanded by Bou-Amama himself, found itself caught between General Détrie's column encamped at El-Maya and that of Col. Mallaret posted near Kreïder, at Ksar-el-Krelifa. He had to pass between the two camps, a task which was by no means easy. Then Bou-Amama sent out a detachment of cavalry to the camp occupied by General Détrie, who pursued it with its whole detachment as far as Aïn-Sfisifa, away beyond the Chott, persuaded that he was on the track of the marabout. The trick succeeded. The road was clear. The day after the general's departure the rebel chief was occupying his camp; this was the fourteenth of June.

On the other hand, Colonel Mallaret, instead of guarding the passage at Kreïder, had pitched his camp at Ksar-el-Krelifa, two miles farther on. Bou-Amama immediately sent out a strong detachment of cavalry to pass in front of the Colonel, who contented himself with firing the six cannon-shot which have become legendary. And during this time the convoy of loaded camels was quietly passing the salt lake at the Kreïder, the only point where it was easy. From there the marabout must have left his provisions with his tribe, the Mogrars, about two hundred miles south of Géryville.

From whom does all this precise information come? will be asked. From everybody. Naturally, some will dispute one point, others another. I can affirm nothing, as I did nothing but gather the information which seemed to me most likely. It seems to be impossible, in Algeria, to obtain accurate information about a thing which occurred a mile from where one happens to be. As for military news, it seemed, during this whole campaign, to have been supplied by some practical jokers. Bou-Amama was reported, on the same day, at six different points by six different officers who thought that they held him. A complete collection of official despatches, with a little supplement containing those from authorized agencies, would make a very amusing book. Certainly, messages whose improbability was too evident were stopped in the offices at Algiers.

A witty caricature, made by one of the colonists, seemed to have explained the situation very well. It represented a fat old general, covered with gold braid, with a heavy mustache, facing the desert. He was watching with a perplexed look the immense stretch of land, bare and undulating, whose limits could not be perceived, and he was murmuring: "They are out there—somewhere!" Then turning around to one of his staff officers, standing motionless behind him, he exclaimed in a firm voice: "Telegraph the government that the enemy is before me and that I am starting in its pursuit."

The only reliable information which could be obtained came from Spanish prisoners escaped from Bou-Amama. I was able, through an interpreter, to talk with one of these men, and this is what he told me:

He called himself Blas Rojo Pélisaire. On the evening of the tenth of June he and his comrades

were leaving a convoy of seven carts, when along the road, they found other carts broken, and between the wheels the murdered drivers. One of them was still living. They began to take care of him; but a troop of Arabs rushed upon them. The Spaniards had but one gun—they surrendered; nevertheless, all were massacred with the exception of Blas Rojo; who was probably spared on account of his youth and good looks. It is known that Arabs are not indifferent to manly beauty. He was led to camp, where he found other prisoners. At midnight one of them was killed without any reason. He was a mechanic (a man whose duty it was to take care of the brakes of the carts) called Domingo. The following day was the eleventh. Blas learned that other prisoners had been killed during the night. It was the day of the great massacres. They remained in the same place. Then, in the evening, the horsemen brought in two women and a child.

On the twelfth they broke camp, marching all day. On the thirteenth, in the evening, they camped at Dayat-Kered.

On the fourteenth they marched in the direction of Ksar-Krelifa. This was the day of the Mallaret affair. The prisoner did not hear the cannon, which fact leads us to believe that Bou-Amama sent off a detachment of cavalry to file past the French line, while the convoy of plunder with which was Blas crossed the salt lake a few miles further up, well sheltered.

For a week they zig-zagged aimlessly about the country. When they arrived at Tis-Moulins, the quarreling leaders separated, each taking along his own prisoners.

Bou-Amama was kindly to the prisoners, espe-

cially to the women, whom he put in a special tent and had guarded.

One of them, a beautiful girl of about eighteen, was forced, along the road, to live with a Trafi chief, who threatened her with death if she were to resist. But the chief refused to sanction their union.

Blas Rojo was attached to Bou-Amama's service, but he did not see him. He only saw his son, who directed the military operation. He looked to be about thirty. He was tall, thin, bronzed yet pale, with large eyes, and he wore a small beard. He owned two chestnut horses, one of which, a French one, seemed to have belonged to Commander Jacquet.

The prisoner had no knowledge of the Kreïder affair.

Blas Rojo managed to escape in the neighborhood of Bas-Yala, but, not knowing the country very well, he was forced to follow dry river-beds, and after walking for three days and three nights he arrived at Marhoum. Bou-Amama had with him five hundred cavalrymen and three hundred infantry, plus a convoy of camels destined to carry the booty.

For two weeks after the massacres trains ran day and night on the little railroad along the salt lakes. They were continually gathering in poor mutilated Spaniards and tall, beautiful girls, naked and bleeding. The inhabitants of the country say that the military authorities could have avoided this butchery with a little foresight. At any rate, they could not manage a handful of rebels. Why were our perfected weapons powerless against the old-fashioned Arab muskets? That is for others to find out and explain.

The Arabs, at any rate, have over us one advan-

tage against which we vainly strive. They are natives. Living on a few figs and a pinch of flour, tireless in this climate which exhausts men from the north, riding horses as sober as themselves and like them immune from heat, they can ride sixty or seventy-five miles a day. Having neither baggage, convoys nor provisions to drag along with them, they move with surprising rapidity, pass between the camps of two columns in order to attack and pillage a village which is thought to be perfectly safe, disappear without leaving any trace, and then return quickly when they are thought to be far away.

In European warfare, no matter how promptly an army marches, it cannot move without the fact being known. The mass of baggage fatally hinders speed and always indicates the road which has been taken. A party of Arabs, on the contrary, leaves no more indications of its whereabouts than a flying bird. These wandering horsemen come and go around us with the speed of a swallow.

When they attack, they can almost always be conquered, and are beaten notwithstanding their courage. But it is almost impossible to pursue them; they can never be caught when they are fleeing, therefore they take care to avoid encounters, and, as a rule, they are satisfied to harass our troops. They charge with impetuosity, galloping furiously on their thin horses, rushing forward like a storm of floating garments and dust.

Still galloping, they dicharge their long guns, and then, suddenly describing a sharp curve, they tear away at full speed just as they came, leaving here and there on the ground behind them a white bundle which flutters like a wounded bird with blood on its wings.

THE PROVINCE OF ALGERIA

ALGERIANS, the true inhabitants of Algeria, know hardly anything of their country outside of the plain of the Mitidja. They live quietly in one of the most charming cities of the world, declaring that the Arab is ungovernable and good only to kill or to cast away in the desert.

Of the Arabs they have seen only the vermin of the south which swarm in their streets. In the cafés they speak of Laghouat, of Bou-Saada or of Saida as though these places were at the very end of the world. It is even rather uncommon to find an officer who knows all three provinces. He usually stays in the same district until it is time for him to return to France.

It is only fair to add that it is becoming very difficult to travel as soon as one ventures beyond the roads known in the south. It can be done only with the support of the military authorities. The commanding officers consider themselves as all-powerful monarchs; and no stranger could venture on their lands without running very great risks from the Arabs. Any solitary person would immediately be arrested by the chiefs, taken under escort to the

nearest officer, and brought back between two spahis to the territory under civil government.

But if one can show the slightest recommendations, one meets with the kindest treatment from the officers in charge. Living alone, so far from any neighbors, they receive the traveler in the most charming manner; being by themselves, they read a great deal, are well educated, and talk intelligently and with great pleasure; the solitude of this great desolate land with its boundless horizons has taught them how to think as do all solitary workers. I left France with the usual prejudice which exists against these men. I returned with greatly changed ideas.

It is thanks to several of these officers that I was able to take a long excursion beyond the beaten paths of travel, going from tribe to tribe.

The Ramadan had just begun. Everybody in the colony was anxious, for they feared a general uprising at the end of this Mahometan Lent.

The Ramadan lasts thirty days. During this time no true servant of Mahomet should drink, eat or smoke from the earliest morning hours when the sun appears until the time when the eye can no longer distinguish a thread of white from a thread of red. This harsh rule is not followed absolutely literally, and many a cigarette glows as soon as the fiery ball has disappeared behind the horizon, and before the eye has ceased to distinguish red from white.

With the exception of this haste to smoke, no Arab transgresses the severe law about fasting and absolute abstinence. Men, women, boys from fifteen on, girls as soon as they are marriageable, that is to say between eleven and thirteen, remain all

day without eating or drinking. It is not so hard to go without eating, but to abstain from drinking during this terrible heat is fearful. During this Lent there are no dispensations. No one would dare to ask for one. The public women themselves, the Oulad-Naïl, who swarm in all Arabian centers and in the great oases, fast just as the chiefs, perhaps even more. And those of the Arabs whom we thought civilized, who ordinarily show themselves disposed to accept our customs, to share our ideas, to second our actions, become suddenly, as soon as the Ramadan begins, savagely fanatical and stupidly fervent.

It is easy to understand what furious exaltation will result, for these narrow and obstinate minds, from this strict religious practice. All day long these poor unfortunates meditate on an empty stomach, seeing their conquerors eat, drink, and smoke before them. And they repeat to themselves that if they kill one of these *roumis* during the Ramadan, they will go straight to heaven, that the period of our rule is drawing to an end, for their chiefs continually promise them that they are going to drive us into the sea with their guns.

It is especially during the Ramadan that flourish the Aïssaouas, scorpion-eaters, snake-swallowers, religious fakirs, the only ones perhaps, with a few miscreants and some nobles, who have no fanatical faith.

These exceptions are extremely rare; I can only mention one.

An officer from Boghar was starting for a twenty days' march into the south. He asked the three spahis who were accompanying him not to observe the Ramadan, figuring that he could not obtain

much from men worn out from hunger. Two of the soldiers refused, the third answered: "Lieutenant, I do not observe the Ramadan. I am not a marabout, I am noble."

He was, indeed, from a big tent, a son of one of the oldest and most illustrious families of the desert.

A strange custom exists which dates from the time of our occupation and which seems most grotesque when one thinks of the serious results which the Ramadan can have for us. As we wished, at the beginning, to be at peace with the conquered ones, and as flattering their religion is the best way to take them, it was decided that the French cannon would give the signal for abstinence during the sacred period. Therefore, in the morning, at the first pale streaks of dawn, a cannon orders the fast to begin; and each evening, about twenty minutes after sunset, from all the towns, from every fort or military post, a cannon goes off, which causes thousands of cigarettes to light up, as many throats to drink, while throughout Algeria countless dishes of *kous-kous* are being prepared. I was able, in the great mosque at Algiers, to observe the religious ceremony which opens the Ramadan.

The building is very plain, with its whitewashed walls and carpet-covered floor. The Arabs enter quickly, barefooted, with their shoes in their hands. They place themselves in regular lines, widely separated from each other and more even than those of soldiers at manœuvres. They place their shoes on the floor before them with whatever small objects they may have had in their hands; and they stand there as motionless as statues, facing toward a little chapel, which indicates the direction of the Mecca.

In this chapel the mufti officiates. In his old,

low, cackling and monotonous voice he cries a kind of sorrowful chant, which, once heard, is never to be forgotten. The intonation often changes, and then all the listeners with a single, rhythmic, silent, and rapid movement fall with their heads against the ground, remain prostrate for a few seconds, and then arise without having made the slightest noise and without, for an instant, interrupting the shaky little chant of the mufti. And these people are continually falling and arising with a fantastical promptness, silence, and regularity. The scraping of chairs, coughing, and whispering of Catholic churches is not to be heard here. One feels that a savage faith fills these people, bends them, and straightens them out like puppets; it is a silent and tyrannical faith which takes hold of their bodies, makes their faces immovable, and wrings their hearts. An indefinable sentiment of respect mingled with pity comes over one at the sight of these lean fanatics, who have no superfluous flesh to hinder their prostrations and who are religious with the mechanical regularity of Prussian soldiers at drill.

The walls are white, the rugs on the floor are red. The men are dressed in white, red, blue, or in any other color which may suit their fancy, but all are gracefully draped and carry themselves proudly. On their head and shoulders falls a soft light from the lusters.

A family of marabouts occupies a platform and chants the answers with the same intonation used by the mufti. This continues indefinitely.

It is during the evenings of the Ramadan that one should visit the Casbah. This name "Casbah," which means fortress, has been applied to the whole Arabian section of the town. Since the inhabitants

fast and sleep during the daytime, they eat and live during the night. Then these little streets, steep as a mountain path, muddy, narrow, turning, twisting, crossing and recrossing, and so mysterious-looking that unconsciously one speaks in hushed tones, then are they filled with a population which seems to have sprung from the "Arabian Nights." That is the exact impression which they give one. One takes a trip into this land told of by the Sultana Schéhérazade. Here we find in the low doorways, thick as prison walls and with wonderfully strong fastening, the veiled women; here also in the depths of courtyards are faces barely seen and vague noises coming from these houses, as tightly closed as secret coffers. In the doorways we often find men stretched out, eating and drinking. Sometimes these groups take up a whole narrow passage. One must step over bare legs and look for a place to put one's foot in the midst of a bundle of white cloth stretched out on the ground, and from which head, legs, and arms extend.

The Jews open the little dens which they use as shops, and the clandestine houses of pleasure are so numerous that one can hardly walk five minutes without seeing two or three.

In the Arabian cafés crowds of men stand huddled, one against the other, sitting on the bench which runs around the wall, or simply squatting on the ground, drink coffee from tiny little cups. They stay there motionless and silent, holding in their hands the cups which they occasionally carry to their mouths with a slow, languid movement. Twenty of them stand in a space where we would feel crowded if there were ten of us.

Calm-looking fanatics come and go amid these

quiet drinkers, preaching revolt and announcing the end of servitude.

It is, so they say, in the *ksar* (Arabian village) of Boukhrari that the first symptoms of great insurrections are to be felt. This village is on the road to Laghouat. Let us go there.

As one looks up at the Atlas Mountains from the immense plain of the Mitidja one sees a gigantic rift which cuts the mountain in a southerly direction. It is as though it had been slit open with an axe. This fissure is called the gorge of the Chiffa. It is through here that passes the road to Médéah, to Boukhrari and to Laghouat. We enter the gap in the mountain, follow the small stream, the Chiffa, and go along the narrow, wild, and wooded gorge. Everywhere we find springs. The trees grow on this upright wall, clinging to anything, and look as though they were scaling the rock.

The passage grows still narrower. The steep rocks threaten us; the sky looks like a narrow blue ribbon between the high peaks; then suddenly, around a sharp curve, appears a little inn at the beginning of a wooded ravine. This is the Ruisseau des Singes Inn.

Before the door the water babbles in a brook; it bubbles and trickles and fills this nook with green and freshness which makes one think of the calm valleys of Switzerland. We rest and doze in the shade; but suddenly over our heads a branch moves; we sit up—then through the thick foliage we see a hurried flight of monkeys, bounding, falling, and jumping with shrill cries. There are big and small ones, hundreds, perhaps thousands of them. The woods are full, peopled, swarming with them. A few, captured by the inn-keepers, are tamed and

quieted. As soon as we are quiet, they come up, watch, and observe us. One might think that the traveler is the great distraction for the inhabitants of this valley. There are times, however, when one does not see a single one.

After the inn of the Ruisseau des Singes the valley once more narrows down; and, suddenly, to the left, we see, springing almost from the very top of the mountain, two cascades of pure, limpid water, two silver ribbons. If you only knew how sweet it is to see these cascades in this land of Africa! We climb for a long time. The gorge becomes less deep and less wooded. As we ascend, the mountain becomes more and more barren. We pass through fields, and when we reach the summit we find oaks, elms and willows, the trees of our own country. We sleep at Médéah, a little white city very similar to many of our French towns.

It is after Médéah that the fierce ravages of the sun begin again. Nevertheless we cross a forest, but a poor, thin forest, showing the burned trees and parched earth. After that there is no living creature near us.

To my left opens out the little valley, arid and red, without a single blade of grass; it stretches out in the distance like a trough of sand. Suddenly a great shadow slowly passes over it, gliding from one end to the other like a dark stain on the barren land. This is the real, the only inhabitant of this mournful and deserted land. It seems to reign here like a mysterious evil spirit. I raise my eyes and I see him moving away with motionless, outstretched wings, the great scavenger, the lean vulture soaring over his domain beneath this other master, who is killing this vast country—the Sun, the vast Sun.

When we descend toward Boukhrari, we discern as far as the eye can see the endless valley of the Chélif. It is there in all its hideousness, in the yellow misery of the soil. It appears ragged, like an old Arab, crossed by the bed of a stream without water, drained to the mud by the heat from the heavens. This time the fire, which replaces the air and fills the atmosphere, has conquered, devoured, pulverized, destroyed everything.

Something sweeps your brow; in another place it would be a breeze, here it is fire. Something seems to be floating over the rocky peaks; it might be mist, but it is fire, or rather visible heat. If the earth were not already charred through, this strange haze would remind one of the smoke which rises from flesh burned with a red-hot iron. And all this has a peculiar color, blinding and yet soft, the color of hot sand which seems tinged with a faint violet fallen from the melting sky.

There are no insects in this land of dust, only a few large ants. The thousands of little creatures which we see in our land could not exist in this furnace. On certain scorching days the flies themselves die, just as they do with us when a cold wave comes. It is only with difficulty that one can raise chickens. We see the poor creatures hop around with open beaks and flapping wings in a pitiful yet comical manner.

For three years the springs have been drying up, and the all-powerful Sun seems to glory in its great victory.

However, we see a few trees. This is Boghar, at the top of a dusty mountain.

To the left, in a rocky crevice crowning a hill and hardly distinguishable from the soil, so monot-

onous is the color, a large village stands out against the sky, it is the *ksar* of Boukhrari.

At the foot of this dusky hill which supports this vast Arabian village, are a few houses hidden in a fold; they are inhabited by a mixed community.

The *ksar* of Boukhrari is one of the largest Arabian villages in Algeria. It is right on the southern frontier, a little beyond the Tell, in the zone of transition between the civilized country and the Great Desert. Its situation gives to it a peculiar political importance, for it makes a sort of bond between the Arabs from the coast and those from the Sahara. Therefore it has always been the pulse of revolts. It is here that comes the given order, and from here that the command is given out. The most distant tribes send their envoys to find out what is happening in Boughrari. The eyes of all Algeria are fixed on this spot. Alone the French administration pays no attention to what happens here. It is administered like a typical French town, by a mayor, some sleepy-eyed peasant, with a forester as assistant. There is no check on who comes or goes. The Arabs coming from everywhere can go around, talk, conspire to their heart's content without being disturbed in the slightest.

At the foot of the *ksar,* two or three hundred yards away, is the mixed community, governed by a civilian, whose power is unlimited over a vast expanse of barren land, which is not worth while watching. But he cannot infringe on the duties of his neighbor, the mayor.

Opposite, on the mountain, is Boghar, where dwells the commanding officer of the military district. He has in his hands the fullest powers and means of action, but he can do nothing in the *ksar,*

which is ruled by its own mayor. Now, the *ksar* is only inhabited by Arabs. It is the dangerous spot which is overlooked, while the neighboring places are carefully watched. The administration seeks to remedy the effect and not the cause.

What is the result? The military and civil rulers, when they agree, organize a kind of secret police and try to get information through spies.

Is it not surprising to see this Arabian center, recognized as dangerous by every one, freer than a French town, whereas it would be impossible for any Frenchman whatsoever, unless he be recommended by some influential person, to penetrate into the southern military districts?

In the mixed community there is an inn. I spent a sweltering night there. The air seemed still to be burning from the last flare of daylight. It was stifling. I arose at early dawn. The sun appeared, eager for its incendiary work. Before my window, which looked out on the horizon, already torrid, stood a little stage-coach. On the yellow panels stood the words: "Southern Mail!"

Southern Mail! Therefore one could still go farther south in this terrible month of August. The South! What a rapid, burning word! The South! Fire! Over there to the north, in speaking of temperate countries we say: "The Midi." Here it is: "The South."

I looked at this short syllable, as surprised as though I had never seen it before. It seemed to me as though I were discovering its hidden meaning. For the best known words, like the faces which we often see, have secret meanings which strike us all of a sudden, we know not why.

The South! The desert, the nomads, the unex-

plored lands, and then the negroes! This is a whole new world, something like the beginning of a universe! The South! What strength seems to lie behind that word when one is on the edge of the Sahara!

During the afternoon I took a look at the *ksar*. Boukhrari is the first village where one meets the Oulad-Naïl. One is astounded at the appearance of these desert courtesans.

The crowded streets are full of Arabs lying in the doorways, whispering or sleeping. Everywhere their fluttering white garments seem to increase the uniform whiteness of the houses. There are no spots; everything is white; and suddenly a woman appears, standing in a doorway, with a large headdress, which seems of Assyrian origin, surmounted by a golden diadem. She wears a long, bright red robe. Her arms and ankles are encircled with sparkling bracelets, and her regular features are tattooed with blue stars.

Then we see more, many more, with the same monumental headdress. It looks like a square mountain with a thick braid falling to the lower tip of her ear, then caught up again behind, and losing itself again in the opaque mass of hair. They always wear diadems, some of which are very costly. The breast is completely covered under necklaces, medals, heavy jewelry; and a curiously engraved silvered padlock hangs down from two strong chains of the same metal, at one end of which hangs the key which fits the lock.

Some of these girls only wear small bracelets. They are beginners. The others, the older ones, sometimes wear jewelry amounting to ten or fifteen thousand francs. I saw one with a necklace formed

of eight rows of twenty-franc pieces. It is thus that they keep their hard-earned savings. The rings on their ankles are of massive silver and surprisingly heavy. Indeed, as soon as they can save up two or three hundred francs in silver, they carry it to a native jeweler and have him melt and make it into chased ankle rings, symbolical padlocks, chains, or heavy bracelets. The tiaras which they wear are obtained in the same manner.

Their monumental headdress, a clever and complicated tangle of braids, requires almost a whole day to put it up and consumes an incredible quantity of oil. Therefore they do not have their hair dressed more than once a month, and they take great care not to disturb this edifice, which soon spreads an intolerable odor.

The best time to see them is in the evening, when they dance in a Moorish café.

The village is silent. White forms lie along the walls of the houses. The hot sky is studded with stars, and these African stars shine with a brilliancy which I had never imagined—the sparkling of a diamond, throbbing, living, flashing.

Suddenly, as we turn a corner a noise attracts us, a wild, savage music, a rumble of kettledrums, drowned by the shrill, continuous, deafening, and wild sound of a flute, which is played by a big black negro, the proprietor of the place.

Before the door is a heap of burnous, a bundle of Arabs, who look on without entering, and which looks like a moving light in the brightness which comes from the interior. Inside, rows of motionless creatures in white are seated on boards along the walls, beneath a very low roof. On the ground, crouching, with their gaudy raiments, their flashing

jewelry, their tattooed faces and their high head-dress, which remind us of Egyptian bas-reliefs, the Oulad-Naïl are waiting.

We enter. No one moves. Then, according to the custom, we seize a few Arabs, and, pulling them away from their places, we sit down; they walk away with impassive faces. Others crowd up and make room for them.

On a platform in the rear of the establishment, four men in ecstatic poses are frantically beating the stretched skins of four tambourines, while the proprietor, a tall negro, walks about with a majestic tread, blowing furiously on his maddening flute, without stopping for a single second.

Then two Oulad-Naïls stand up and take their places at the two extremities of a space left vacant between two benches, and they begin to dance. Their dance is a slow march, emphasized by a tap of the heel which shakes all the ankle rings. At each one of these taps the whole body bends in a kind of methodical limp; the hands are held to the height of the eyes and are turned about slowly at each movement with a brisk snapping of the fingers. The face, turned a little to the side, is rigid, impassive, and astonishingly motionless, the expression of a sphinx, while the eyes follow the motions of the hands, as though fascinated by the slow movements of these members.

Thus the dancers approach each other. When they meet, their hands touch; they seem to tremble; they bend backward, letting a long veil, which falls from their head to their feet, trail behind them.

Again they meet and gracefully sway to and fro, like two loving doves. The long veil floats behind them like wings. Suddenly they straighten out

again, once more impassive; they part, and each one continues her slow and limping glide as far as the line of spectators.

Not all of them are pretty; but all possess a peculiar charm. Nothing can give a correct idea of these crouching Arabs, among whom calmly pass these girls, covered with gold and flashing raiments.

Sometimes they change their dance a little bit. These courtesans originally came from only one tribe, the tribe of the Oulad-Naïl. They used to amass their dowries in this manner and then return home to get married. They were held in no less high esteem by their tribe. It was the custom. Nowadays, although it is still admissible for the daughters of the Oulad-Naïl to leave home and make a fortune in this manner, all the tribes furnish courtesans to the Arabian centers.

The proprietor of the café where they show themselves is always a negro. As soon as he perceives strangers he pastes a silver five-franc piece to his forehead, which stays glued to the skin, no one knows how. Then he walks around his establishment, furiously blowing on his maddening flute, persistently pointing to the money which he has stuck to himself in order to induce the visitor to offer him as much.

Those of the Oulad-Naïls who are of noble birth show great generosity and delicacy in their dealings with strangers. If the lover of a minute admires for a second the thick rug which serves as a bed for this noble trafficker, her servant carries it to him as soon as he has reached his lodgings.

As with girls of France, there are men who live from the produce of their work. Sometimes one of them is found at the bottom of a ravine, with her

throat cut and robbed of all her jewels. Some man whom she loved has disappeared, and is never heard of again.

The place where they receive men is a narrow room with clay walls. In the oases the roof is simply made of weeds packed tightly, one on top of the other, wherein hides a whole army of scorpions. Rugs spread one over the other make the couch.

Rich Arabian or French people who wish to spend a night in luxurious orgies rent until daybreak a Moorish bath with all its servants. There they eat and drink and carouse.

This question of morals brings me to a very delicate subject.

Our ideas, our customs, and instincts differ so completely from those which we meet in this country that one hardly dares speak at home of a vice which is so frequent here that European people are no longer even shocked at it. One even laughs at it, instead of growing indignant. It is a very delicate matter, but one which cannot be passed over if one wishes to give an accurate idea of the life and character of the Arabian people.

Here one meets at every step these cases of unnatural love between beings of the same sex, which were recommended by Socrates, the "friend" of Alcibiades. Often, in history, we find cases of this strange and unwholesome passion to which Cæsar abandoned himself, which the Romans and the Greeks- constantly practised, which Henry III brought into style in France, and of which many great men have been suspected. But these examples are the exceptions, the more remarkable because they are rare. In Africa this abnormal love has entered so completely into the customs that the

Arabs seem to look upon it as being just as natural as the normal kind.

Whence comes this unnatural instinct? Doubtless from many causes. The most evident is the preponderance of men over women. Perhaps also it may be caused by the excessive climate, which excites the senses. Perhaps it is a vicious heredity inherited by this people from their immoral ancestors of biblical times.

I do not dare to cite some recent examples which were given me of the strength of this lawless passion. There are yet other customs, widespread, but so base that I cannot mention them here.

One night, at about sunset, as I was coming down from Boukhrari, I saw three Oulad-Naïls, two in red and one in blue, standing in the midst of a crowd of men, all sitting cross-legged or lying down. These women looked like savage divinities dominating a prostrate people.

The eyes of all were fixed on the fort at Boghar, over on the other side of the dusty valley on the side of the big hill. All were motionless, attentive, as though expecting some wonderful event to happen. Every one held an unlighted cigarette between his fingers.

Suddenly from the fortress came a puff of white smoke; immediately all the cigarettes were lighted, while the ground shook with a muffled and distant roar. It was the French cannon announcing to the conquered that their daily fast was over.

THE ZAR'EZ

ONE morning as I was breakfasting at the fort of Boghar, with the captain of the Arabian post, who, according to competent authorities, is one of the most obliging and capable officers in the southern service, the conversation turned to a mission which had been intrusted to two young lieutenants. They were to take a long trip through the territories of Boghar, Djelfa, and Bou Saida in order to locate water. There was still fear of a general insurrection after the Ramadan, and it had been decided to send an expedition to the tribes which inhabit this part of the land.

As yet, no accurate map of this country exists. There are only a few topographical reliefs made by a few officers, who occasionally pass through here, approximate indication of springs and wells, notes scribbled hastily on the pommel of a

saddle, rough sketches made without any kind of an instrument.

I immediately asked for permission to join the little troop. It was granted me in the most gracious manner possible.

We left two days later. It was three o'clock in the morning when a spahi knocked at the door of the miserable little inn at Boukhrari and woke me up. I opened the door for the man. He stood there in his black-braided red jacket, his wide, plaited pantaloons, which stopped at the knee and were tucked into the leather gaiters worn by desert riders. He was a medium-sized Arab. His hooked nose had been slit open by a saber, and the scar exposed the left nostril. His name was Bou-Abdallah. He said:

"Your horse is ready, mossieu."

"Has the Lieutenant arrived?" I asked.

"He is coming," he answered.

Soon a distant noise could be heard in the dark and barren valley; then shadows appeared and passed on. I could only distinguish the strange and clumsy bodies of the three camels which were carrying the canteens, our cots, and what few objects we were taking with us for a twenty days' journey into a wilderness almost unknown to the officers themselves.

In a short time, coming from the direction of the fort at Boghar I heard the rapid galloping of a company of horsemen, and the two lieutenants who were to lead the expedition appeared with their escort, composed of another spahi and an Arabian horseman named Dellis, a man of noble birth from an illustrious native family.

I immediately mounted, and we started. The night was still absolutely dark, calm, one might al-

most say motionless. For a while we went to the north, following the valley of the Chélif; we turned to the right into a valley just as day was breaking.

In this country dawn and dusk do not exist. One hardly ever sees those long-drawn-out crimson clouds, sharply defined, brilliant with the blazing blood-red horizon of our northern skies, as the sun rises or sets.

Here there is at first a very faint light, which grows, stretches, and fills the whole atmosphere in a few seconds. Then suddenly, at the crest of the mountain, or at the edge of a boundless plain, the sun appears in all its strength, without the reddish, sleepy look which it has in our foggy land.

The strangest thing about these desert dawns is the silence. Who, at home, does not know the first chirping of the bird long before daylight, as soon as the first pale streaks appear in the sky, and this answering cry from the neighboring tree; finally this incessant chatter of whistling, trilling, and sharp notes, together with the distant crowing of cocks; all this clamor of the awakening of the beasts, all these cheerful voices coming through the foliage?

Here, not a sound. The enormous sun rises over this land which it has devastated, and it already seems to look down at it like a master, as though to make sure that no living thing remains. No cry is ever heard, except occasionally the neighing of a horse; not a sign of life is to be seen except when one has camped in the neighborhood of a spring, to which some silent herd slowly marches up to drink.

The heat immediately becomes scorching; we put on over the flannel hood and the white cap the enormous *nédol,* a straw hat with a very wide brim.

We follow along the valley slowly. As far as we could see everything was bare, of a grayish yellow, burning and superb. At times, in a little hollow or in a dried-up river bed, in some stagnant water, a few green reeds made a pleasing green spot; in a fold in the mountain, two or three trees indicated a spring. We were not yet in that country which we were soon to cross, where thirst could not be quenched.

We were still climbing. Small valleys led into ours, and as noon approached the horizon almost disappeared in a faint haze of heat, which blended the distance into tones of faint blues and pinks, which appeared to be almost white, but which were nevertheless slightly colored and which had a softness and exquisite charm when compared with the immediate surroundings.

At last we reached the top of the mountain, and El-Akhedar-ben-Yahia, the chief with whom we were to camp, came to meet us, followed by a few horsemen. He was an Arab from an illustrious family, the son of the Bach'agha Yahia-ben-Aïssa, nicknamed "Bach'agha with the wooden leg." He led us to the camp, which was near a spring, under four giant trees, whose roots were continually bathed by the water, the only green thing to be seen along the horizon of barren, stony peaks which stretched around as far as the eye could reach. Luncheon was immediately served. The chief could not join us on account of the Ramadan, but he sat down opposite us in order to see that we lacked nothing; beside him sat his brother El-Haoués-ben-Yahia, chief of the Oulad-Alane-Berchieh. Then appeared a child of about twelve, frail, but with a noble appearance and infinite charm. I had already

noticed him a few days before amidst the Ouled-Naïls in the Moorish café in Boukhrari.

I had been struck by the fineness and dazzling whiteness of the garments of this frail little Arab, with his noble appearance, with the respect with which every one seemed to treat him. When I had expressed surprise at seeing him at such a tender age frequenting courtesans, I was told: "He is the youngest son of the Bach-agha. He is coming here to see life and know the women!" How different from our French customs!

The child recognized me and came forward gravely, holding out his hands. Then, as his tender age excused him from the Ramadan, he sat down beside us, and, with his thin, slender fingers, he began to tear apart the roast mutton. I thought I understood his big brothers, the two chiefs, who appeared to be about forty, teasing him about his trip to town, asking him where he had obtained that silk scarf which he was wearing around his neck, and whether it was the gift of some woman.

That day we were able to take our siesta in the shade of the trees. I awoke as night was falling, and I climbed a neighboring hill in order to get a full view of the horizon. The sun, ready to disappear, was tinged with red in an orange sky. Everywhere, to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, as far as the eye could see, rows of mountains stood out before me, pink, like the wings of a flamingo. One might have thought it the fairy-like apotheosis of some opera, with surprising and unbelievable colors, something fictitious, forced, unnatural, and yet withal strangely beautiful.

The following day we descended into the plain on the other side of the mountain, a plain of such in-

finite size that it took us three days to cross it, notwithstanding the fact that we could see the chain of the Djebel-Gada Mountains opposite us. Here was a mournful stretch of sand, or rather of dust, sometimes relieved by a patch of alfalfa which forced our horses to zigzag as they went.

These African plains are surprising. They seem as flat and bare as a floor, when, on the contrary, they are continually crossed by undulations, like the sea after a storm, which, from a distance, seems perfectly calm, because the surface is smooth, but which only moves with a long, slow swell. The slopes on these land ways are insensible; one never loses sight of the mountains at the horizon, but just the same a whole army could hide in some parallel groove a mile away.

It is just this fact which makes the pursuit of Bou-Amama so difficult on these highlands of Southern Oran.

Every morning, at daybreak, we set out across these endless and mournful stretches; every evening, we see a few white-clad horsemen come toward us and lead us to a patched tent, under which are spread out some rugs. Every day we eat the same things, we talk a little, then we sleep, or dream.

How far away from the world we feel, far from life, far from everything, under this low tent, through the holes of which we can see the stars, and through whose open flaps we can observe the immense, barren land of sand!

This land is always monotonous, always the same, charred and dried; and yet one wishes for nothing here, one hopes for nothing. This calm landscape with its dazzling light suffices to the eye,

to the mind, to the senses, and to dreams, because it is complete, *absolute,* and because one could not conceive of its being otherwise. The sight of the thin verdure even offends as something false or out of place.

Every day one sees the same thing: fire devouring the world, and as soon as the sun has set, the moon, in turn, rises over this infinite solitude. But every day the silent desert, little by little, fills one's mind and penetrates the thoughts just as the blinding light parches the skin; and one would like to become a nomad like these men, who change their country without ever changing their fatherland, in the midst of these boundless spaces, always more or less alike.

Each day the officer on duty sends ahead a native horseman to tell the chief with whom we expect to eat and sleep the following day that we are coming, in order that he may procure the necessary food for man and beast. This custom, which is equivalent to billeting in France, becomes very burdensome for the tribes, from the way it is practised.

Who says Arab says thief, without any exception. This is what occurs. The chief addresses himself to one of the leaders and claims the supplies from his men. In order to get rid of this burden the leader pays the chief. The latter pockets the money and applies to another, who often does the same thing. Some one, however, has got to procure the supplies. If the chief has an enemy the duty falls to him; and he, in turn, treats the simple Arabs the way the chief treats the leaders.

This is how a tax which should cost twenty or thirty francs for a tribe invariably amounts to four or five hundred. And it is impossible to change this

state of affairs, for reasons too lengthy to go into here.

As soon as we approach a camp we see in the distance a group of horsemen coming toward us. One of them stays in the lead, alone; the horses walk or trot. Then, suddenly they break into a furious gallop, such as our northern animals could not endure for two minutes. It is the gallop of race horses, which resembles the passing of an express train. But the Arab remains perfectly erect on his saddle, with his white garments floating behind him; and with one jerk he stops the animal, which bends under the shock. Then he jumps to the ground and advances respectfully to the officer, whose hand he kisses. No matter what may be the title, position, power or fortune of the Arab, he almost invariably kisses the hand of any officer whom he happens to meet.

Then the chief remounts and directs the travelers to the tent which has been prepared for them. One usually imagines that Arabian tents are white and brilliant in the sunlight, whereas, on the contrary, they are of a dirty brown striped with yellow. The heavy material used for them is made of heavy, coarse hair from camels or goats. The tent is very low (just high enough to stand up in) and broad. Irregularly placed stakes support it, and all the flaps are raised, in order to permit of a free circulation of air.

Notwithstanding this precaution, the days are intolerable in these canvas dwellings; but the nights are delightful, and one can sleep wonderfully well on the magnificent, thick rugs of the Djebel-Amour, even though they be full of insects.

Rugs constitute the only luxury of wealthy

Arabs. They are piled one on top of the other in a big heap, and they are considered so precious that every man takes off his shoes before stepping on them, just as at the door of a mosque.

As soon as his guests are seated, or, rather, stretched out, on the ground, the chief orders coffee. This coffee is exquisite. The recipe for making it is simple. The bean is crushed, instead of ground, and with it is mixed a certain amount of ambergris, then it is boiled in water.

There is nothing more comical than Arabian china. When a rich chief entertains, his tent is decorated with priceless hangings, beautiful cushions, and marvelous rugs; then the coffee is brought in on an old tin tray, with a few hideous, nicked, and cracked cups, which look as though they might have been purchased at some cheap bazaar in Paris. They are of every size and shape, English porcelain, imitation Japanese, ordinary china, and the ugliest specimens of ordinary thick crockery to be found anywhere. The coffee itself is brought in a cracked pitcher, in a soldier's mess tin, or in a wonderful tin coffee-pot, dented, worn, and shapeless.

This is indeed a strange people, childish and primitive as at the beginning of time. They pass on the earth without attaching themselves to it, without settling down. They live in dwellings made of cloth stretched over a few sticks, and they possess none of the objects without which life to us would seem unbearable. They have no beds, sheets, tables, chairs, not one of these indispensable little things which bring a little comfort into life. They have no furniture, no trade, no art, no knowledge. They hardly know how to sew together goat-skins in order to carry water, and they always make use

of such rough and primitive methods that one remains astounded.

They cannot even mend their tents if the winds tear them; and in the brown linen are numerous holes, through which the rain comes at all times. These wandering horsemen seem neither to be attached to the earth nor to life; they leave a large stone where lie their dead, any stone picked up on the neighboring mountain. Their cemeteries look like a field where some European house might have crumbled to pieces.

Negroes live in cabins, Laplanders in holes, Esquimaux in huts, the wildest of the savages have some kind of a home on or below the ground; they are attached to mother earth. The Arabs pass along, always wandering, without any tenderness for this earth, which we love with all the power of our human hearts; they gallop over it on their horses, unskilled in all our works, indifferent to all our cares, as though they were always going to some place where they can never arrive.

Their customs have remained primitive. Our civilization glides over them without affecting them in the slightest.

They themselves drink out of the goat-skins; but to strangers they offer water in the most extraordinary receptacles. They use everything, from the iron kettle to the tin can with a hole in it. If, in some raid, they were to come across one of our Parisian silk hats, they would undoubtedly save it and offer water out of it to the first general passing through their tribe.

Their cooking consists of four or five dishes. The order in which they are served never varies. First comes a mutton, which has been roasted over

a fire in the open air. A man brings it in whole, carrying it over his shoulder on a pole, which had served as spit, and the silhouette of the skinned beast hanging in the air reminds one of an execution during the Middle Ages. At night it stands out against the red sky in a sinister and grotesque manner, as it is held there by a severe-looking, white-clad person.

This mutton is placed in a flat basket made of braided alfalfa, and set in the center of the group of people sitting around in a circle, after the Turkish fashion. A fork is unknown; everybody uses his fingers or a queer little bone-handled knife. The crisp skin is considered the daintiest part. It is torn off in long strips, and one crunches it, either while drinking muddy water, or camel's milk diluted with water, or sour milk, which has fermented in goat skins, and thus taken on an odor of musk. The Arabs call this drink *leben.*

After the *entrée* a kind of paste like vermicelli is brought in, sometimes in a washbowl, sometimes in an antique kettle. The gravy of this dish is composed of a yellowish liquid where spices strive for supremacy over red pepper in a mixture of dried apricots and mashed dates. I do not recommend this dish to connoisseurs.

When the chief who receives you wishes to be lavish, the *hamis* is now brought on. This dish is wonderful. I will give the recipe for those who might like to try it.

It is prepared either with chicken or with mutton. The meat is cut into small pieces and fried in butter. Then a light gravy is obtained by moistening it with a little warm water. (I should think that a little weak bouillon prepared in advance

would be much better.) A large amount of red pepper, a trace of spice, black pepper, salt, onions, dates, and dried apricots are added; this mixture is cooked until the apricots and dates are soft, and then it is poured over the meat. It is exquisite!

The meal invariably ends with the *kous-kous* or *kouskoussou,* the national dish. The Arabs prepare the *kous-kous* by making little pellets of flour with their fingers. These little grains are cooked in a peculiar manner and moistened with a special kind of broth. I shall remain silent about these recipes, that I may not be accused of writing a cook-book.

Sometimes little honey cakes are brought on, which are excellent.

Each time you take a drink the chief who is receiving you says: "*Saa!*" ("Your health!"). You must answer: "*Allah y selmeck!*" which is equivalent to our "God bless you!" These formulas are repeated many times during a meal.

Every evening, at about four o'clock, we settle down in some new tent, sometimes at the foot of a mountain, sometimes in an endless plain.

As soon as the news of our arrival has spread through the tribe, we see from all sides, in the distance, in the barren country or on the hills, little white specks, which are approaching. They are the Arabs who are coming to observe the officer and to make known to him their claims and complaints. Almost all of them come on horseback, although some come on foot and a good many on small asses.

As soon as they set foot on the ground, they crouch around the tent, and they sit there motionless, with fixed gaze, waiting. At last the chief motions to them, and the complainants advance.

For every officer administers justice. They bring

forward the most extraordinary claims, for no people is as quarrelsome, wrangling, and vindictive as the Arab. As for knowing the truth and giving a fair decision, that is out of the question. Each side brings an extraordinary number of false witnesses, who swear on the ashes of their fathers and mothers to the truthfulness of the most brazen lies. Here are a few examples:

A cadi (the avariciousness of these Mussulman judges is proverbial and well merited) sends for an Arab, and makes the following proposition to him: "You give me twenty-five *douros* and bring me seven witnesses, who will swear in writing, before me, that X—— owes you seventy-five *douros*. I will make him give them to you."

This man brings his witnesses, who swear and sign. Then the judge calls X——, and says to him: "Give me fifty *douros*, and bring me nine witnesses, who will swear that B—— (the first Arab) owes you one hundred and twenty-five *douros*. I will make him give them to you." The second Arab brings his witnesses.

Then the judge orders the first Arab to appear before him, and on the strength of the statement of the seven witnesses, he makes the second one give him seventy-five *douros*. But the second, in turn, proves by his nine witnesses that the first Arab owes him one hundred and twenty-five *douros*. The judge makes him pay them. The share of the judge in this transaction, therefore, amounts to seventy-five *douros* (375 francs), levied on his two victims.

This occurrence is authentic.

Notwithstanding all this, an Arab rarely appeals to a French judge because he cannot be corrupted, while a cadi will give any decision for money.

He also has an unsurmountable dislike for our complicated ways of administering justice. Any written document frightens him, for he pushes his superstition about paper to extremes, fearing anything on which can be written the name of God or any malevolent characters.

At the beginning of the French rule, when a Mussulman found a scrap of paper, he would religiously carry it to his lips, and then bury it in the ground or hide it in some crack of a rock or tree-trunk. This custom frequently caused such disagreeable surprises that the Mohammedans were soon cured of it.

Here is another example of Arabian rascality:

A murder was committed in a tribe near Boghar. An Arab was suspected, but proofs were lacking. There was in this tribe a poor man, recently arrived from a neighboring tribe, and who had established himself there in order to watch over some pecuniary interests. A witness accuses him of the murder; another follows, and still another. Ninety people come forward with the most precise kind of testimony. The stranger was condemned to death and executed. Later the man's innocence was fully proven. The Arabs had simply wished to rid themselves of a stranger, who was in their way, and to prevent a man from their own tribe being compromised.

Lawsuits last for years without a single ray of truth being gleaned from either side. Then they have recourse to a very simple method; both families, as well as the witnesses, are imprisoned. Then, at the end of a few months, they are freed; as a rule, they remain quiet for about a year after that. Then they begin over again.

In the tribe of the Oulad-Alane, which we

crossed, there is a lawsuit which has been going on for the last three years, in which time not a word of truth has been spoken. From time to time the two litigants spend a short time in jail, and they begin over again as soon as they are freed.

These people spend their lives robbing each other and shooting at each other. But they take great care to hide from us any affair in which powder has played a part.

A man from the tribe of the Oulad-Mokhtar, tall and powerful, asked for admittance to the hospital. The officer in charge questioned him about his sickness. Then the Arab opened his garment and showed us a horrible wound, about at the height of the liver, already old and beginning to mortify. The wounded man was told to turn around, and we saw, right opposite the first hole, another one in the middle of a lump about the size of a child's head. When it was pressed, pieces of bone came out. This man had evidently been shot, and the bullet had penetrated his chest and come out through his back, shattering several ribs. But he energetically denied this, swearing that " it was the work of God."

In this country, however, wounds are not considered very serious. The festering and putrefaction produced by the hatching of microbes does not exist, as these creatures can only live in a moist climate. Unless immediate death results, or unless some vital organ is attacked, wounds always heal.

The next day we arrived at the tent of Chief Abd-el-Kader-bel-Hout, an upstart. The tribe which he governs with wisdom is less wild and quarrelsome than the others. Perhaps we should look for another reason for this relative quiet.

In this part of the country the only springs are

on the south side of the Djebel Gada, which is uninhabited. Naturally the water is only supplied by wells common to the whole tribe. Hence the water cannot be diverted from its course, which action is the usual cause of all quarrels and hatred throughout the south.

After all claims have been settled we try to sleep a little in the intense heat of the tent.

Night comes and we dine. A profound quiet settles over the parched earth. In the distance the dogs begin to howl, and the jackals answer them. We stretch ourselves out on the rugs under the sky, studded with stars, which twinkle so brightly that the atmosphere seems moist; then we talk for a long, long time. All our tender memories return to us, and they seem so easy to tell in these warm, starlit evenings. All around the officers' tent Arabs are stretched on the ground, while in a row in front stand a line of fettered horses, with a man guarding over each one.

These horses must not lie down, and they always stand, for a chief's horse must never be tired. As soon as one of them tries to lie down an Arab rushes forward and makes him get up.

But night is advancing. We stretch ourselves out on the heavy woolen rugs, and at times, when we wake up suddenly, we see all around us on the bare ground white forms, lying around and sleeping, like corpses in a shroud.

One day, after a ten hours' march in the burning dust, just as we had arrived in camp, near a well of muddy, brackish water (which, however, seemed delicious to us), the lieutenant suddenly shook me by the arm as I was getting ready to crawl into my tent, and, pointing toward the south, to the distant

horizon, he said: "Don't you see something over there?"

I looked carefully, and answered: "Yes, a tiny gray cloud."

Then the lieutenant smiled, saying: "Well, just sit there, and keep on watching it."

Surprised, I asked him why. My companion continued: "Unless I am mistaken, it is a sand storm, which is coming our way."

It was now about four o'clock and the temperature under the tent was still over 100 degrees. The air seemed asleep under the intolerable slanting flame of the sun. Not a breath, not a sound, except from our horses munching their barley and the indistinct murmuring of the Arabs, who were preparing our meal, a short distance away.

It seemed, however, as though there were some other heat about us than that from the sky, more concentrating, like that which oppresses one when one is in the neighborhood of a big fire. It was not the burning breath, sharp and oft repeated, the fiery caresses which pronounce and precede the sirocco, but a mysterious heating of all the atoms of everything which exists.

I looked at the cloud, which was rapidly growing, but no different from all others. It was now of a dirty brown, and rose high in space. Then it spread out, just as do our northern storms. In fact, I could see absolutely nothing peculiar about it.

At last it stretched across the whole south. Its base was of a dense black, while its top seemed copper-colored and transparent.

A great commotion behind me made me turn around. The Arabs had closed our tent, and they were weighting the edges down with heavy stones.

Each one was running around, calling and tearing about with this dazed look which one sees on people when a camp is surprised.

The daylight seemed suddenly to be going out; I raised my eyes to the sun. It was covered with a yellow veil, and seemed no longer to be anything but a pale, round spot rapidly disappearing.

Then I saw a surprising sight. The whole horizon to the south had disappeared, and a cloudy mass, which rose to the zenith, was coming toward us, swallowing up objects, continually shortening the limits within sight, drowning everything.

Instinctively I retreated toward the tent. It was high time. The hurricane, like an immense yellow wall, was upon us. It came with the speed of an express train; and suddenly it surrounded us in a furious whirlwind of sand and wind, in a storm of loose, burning, whistling, blinding, and suffocating earth.

Our tent, held down by enormous rocks, was shaken like a sail, but resisted. The one belonging to our spahis, less firmly fastened down, strained and trembled for a few minutes, and then finally was torn up from the ground, and immediately flew away and disappeared into the surrounding night of moving dust and sand.

One could not see ten feet ahead. We inhaled sand, drank sand, ate sand. Our eyes were filled with it, our hair was powdered with it; it filtered down our necks, through our sleeves, and even into our shoes.

This continued all night. A burning thirst was torturing us. But the water, milk, coffee, everything was full of sand, which gritted in our teeth. The roast mutton was peppered with it; the *kous-*

kous seemed to be made wholly of fine gravel; the flour was nothing more than powdered rock.

A large scorpion paid us a visit. This weather pleases these creatures, and they all come out of their holes. The neighboring dogs did not howl that night.

In the morning all was over; and the great murdering despot of Africa, the sun, rose superb over a clear horizon.

As this sand storm had disturbed our slumbers, we started out a little later this day.

Before us stretched the chain of Djebel-Cada Mountains, which we had to cross. A pass opened up to the left; we followed along the mountain as far as this passage, and then we entered it. Here once more was the alfalfa, the horrible alfalfa. Suddenly I seemed to discover the trace of a roadway, ruts made by wheels. I stopped, surprised. What a mystery to find a road here! This is the explanation which was given me: An ancient chief of this tribe, wishing to imitate the Europeans living in Algiers, tried to permit himself the luxury of a coach in the desert. But, in order to have a carriage, he needed roads. Therefore this ingenious potentate busied all his Arabian subjects for many months building highways. These poor unfortunates, without picks, shovels, or tools of any kind, digging most of the time with their hands, managed, nevertheless, to level a few miles of road. This was enough for their master, who paraded through the Sahara in a bewildering equipage, accompanied by a native beauty brought from Djelfa by his favorite, a young sixteen-year-old Arab.

One must have seen this country, bare, stripped, denuded, as it is; one must know the Arab with his

imperturbable gravity in order to understand the extreme comedy of this rake, this desert dude driving around with his barefooted sweethearts in a wagon of unpolished wood, with uneven wheels, driven at full speed by his . . . favorite. This tropical elegance, this Saharian debauch, this attempt at style in the middle of Africa, struck me as being extremely ludicrous.

Our troop was rather numerous that morning. Besides the chief and his son, we were accompanied by two native horsemen and by a thin old man with a pointed beard, hooked nose, the expression of a rat, obsequious manners, a crooked spine and deceitful eyes. He was a former chief of the tribe, deposed for extortion. He was to be our guide for the following day, as the road which we were to follow was little frequented, even by Arabs themselves.

However, we finally arrived at the top of the pass. Here a high peak barred our view; but as soon as we had gone around it, I was struck by what was undoubtedly the greatest surprise I had experienced on this trip.

A vast plain stretched out before us, then a lake, an immense lake, shining in the sunlight, the end of which I could not see, lost in the horizon to the left, and whose western extremity was almost opposite to me. A lake in this land, in the middle of the Sahara? A lake which no one had mentioned to me, spoken of by no traveler? Was I mad? I turned to the Lieutenant, asking:

"What lake is this?"

He laughed and answered:

"That is not water, it is salt. The illusion is so perfect that any one can be mistaken. This salt lake is called here the Zar'ez (the Zar'ez-Chergui); it is

from thirty to fifty miles long and about twenty miles broad, according to the spots. These figures are, of course, only approximate, as the country has seldom been crossed and only rapidly, just as we are doing to-day. These salt lakes (there are two of them, the other one farther westward) give their names to the whole country, which is called the Zar'ez. From Bou-Saada on, the plain is called the Hodna, after the salt lake of Msila."

I was looking with wonder at this immense sheet of salt, sparkling under the maddening sun of this land. All this flat, crystallized surface shone like an immense mirror, like a sheet of polished steel. My seared eyes could not stand the reflection from this strange lake, although it was still twenty miles away, a thing which seemed to me almost incredible, as it seems so near.

We were still descending on the other side of the Djebel-Gada, and we were approaching the abandoned fort called Fontaine (Bordj-el-Hammam), where we expected to camp, after an unusually short journey.

The battlements were built at the beginning of the conquest, in order to be able to occupy this deserted country and to leave a garrison with a certain amount of security; the building is now falling in ruins. The surrounding wall, however, is fairly well preserved, and some of the rooms are still habitable.

As on the preceding days, we saw the Arabs file before us until late into the evening; they related to the " officer " infinitely complicated affairs or imaginary griefs, with the sole intention of speaking to the French chief.

A madwoman, come from no one knew where, living no one knew how in these barren solitudes,

roamed around us continually. As soon as we would leave the fort, we would see her, crouching in the most extraordinary positions, hideous, half naked.

Poetically inclined travelers have told much about the respect of the Arabs for the insane. This is how their families respect them . . . they kill them! Several chiefs, when closely questioned on this subject, admitted it. True, a few of these wretched idiots attain sanctity through their imbecility. Such examples are not confined to Africa alone. The family usually rids itself of the weak-minded, and, as the customs of the tribes are to us as a sealed book, thanks to the system of the great native chiefs, we cannot even find the slightest trace of these disappearances.

As I had only traveled a little during the daytime, I wrote during a part of the night. Toward eleven o'clock I went outside, and stretched my rug in front of the door, intending to sleep in the open air. The full moon was filling the atmosphere with a shimmering light, which seemed to varnish everything that it touched. The mountains, the sand, the horizon already yellow under the sun, seemed still more so under the saffron light of this planet.

In front of me, the vast lake of crystallized salt, the Zar'ez, seemed incandescent. It looked as though some fantastical phosphorescence emanated from it and hovered over it; a luminous, fairy-like mist, something supernatural, soft, and so captivating that for over an hour I stood drinking in this scene, unable to close my eyes. And all around me, shining under the moon's caress, the Arabs, sleeping in their burnouses, looked like huge snowflakes.

We left with the rising sun. The plain leading toward Sebkra sloped gently, and was dotted with

thin tufts of yellow alfalfa. The old, rat-faced Arab took the lead, and we followed rapidly behind. The nearer we got, the more perfect was the illusion of water. Was it possible that that was not a giant lake? To our left it occupied the whole space between two mountains, a stretch of fifteen or twenty miles. We were headed straight for the extremity, as we wished to cross at the narrowest point.

On the other side of the Zar'ez I noticed a sort of hill, or rather hump, of a golden yellow, which seemed to separate it from the mountain. To our left, this line followed the white salt as far as the horizon; and, to our right, where a boundless, barren plain stretched between the two mountains, I distinguished as far as the eye can see this same yellow trail. The lieutenant said to me: "Those are the dunes. This bar of sand is over a hundred miles long and of a varying width. We cross it to-morrow."

The ground became strange, covered with a crust of saltpetre, in which the horses' hoofs sank deep. Grasses and reeds could be seen, and one could feel that water was very near the surface. This plain, inclosed by mountains, absorbing the water from four periodical rivers, and receiving all the furious winter showers, would be an immense swamp if the terrific sun did not dry up the surface. At times, in little hollows, pools of briny water appeared; snipe flew away from us with the rapid motion which is peculiar to them.

At last we found ourselves on the edge of the Sebkra; and we started our journey over this sea of salt. Everything before us was white, of a silvery, snowy, hazy, and glistening white. And even as we

advanced on this crystallized surface, covered with powdered salt like fine snow, and where the horses' hoofs sank in a little, as through thin ice, the impression still remained that all this was water. The only thing which might, at a stretch, indicate to an experienced eye that all this was not liquid was the horizon. Usually the line which separates the water from the sky remains visible, as one is always darker than the other. Sometimes, it is true, everything seems to mingle; then the sea takes on a vague tint of blue, which fades into the pale azure of the infinite vacuum. But no matter how faint the distinction may be, one can always see it by attentive observation. Here one could see nothing. The horizon was entirely veiled in a milky white mist of an indescribable softness. At times one would look out into space for the terrestrial limit; then one would search too low, in the middle of this salty plain, over which floated these strange, creamy vapors.

As long as we remained above the Zar'ez we kept a clear perception of distances and forms; as soon as we were on it all certainty of sight disappeared; we were surrounded by a wealth of mirages.

At times we thought that we distinguished the horizon; suddenly in the middle of this solid lake, which a minute ago had seemed uniform, empty, and flat as a mirror, we saw enormous rocks, strange-looking reeds, islands with steep banks. Then, as we would go forward, these strange visions would disappear, and instead of rocks we would find a few small pebbles; the reeds were no longer anything but dried grass, as high as a finger, astonishingly enlarged by this curious optical effect; the banks of the islands became little irregularities in the salty

crust; and this horizon, which we thought twenty miles away, was hidden a hundred yards from us by the trembling mist which the sun raised from the layer of burning salt.

This lasted for about an hour, then we reached the other shore. At first we found a hollow little plain, covered with a crust of dry clay, with which some saltpetre was still mingled. We went up a low slope; grasses appeared, then reeds, then a little blue flower like a forget-me-not, growing at the end of a long, slender stem, and so fragrant that its perfume filled the whole neighborhood. This exquisite odor gave me the impression of a fresh bath; and we smelt of it for a long time, drinking in its delicious freshness.

At last we came to a road of poplars, a regular forest of reeds, some more trees, then our tents, pitched on the edge of the sand, whose uneven undulations sometimes rose as high as twenty or thirty feet, like sea waves.

The heat was becoming fierce, probably increased by the reflection from the Sebkra. The tents, regular ovens, were unbearable; and as soon as we had dismounted we started to look for shade under the trees. We first had to cross a forest of reeds. I was walking in the lead, and suddenly I began to shout and dance for joy. I had just seen some grape vines, apricot, fig, and pomegranate trees, a whole series of gardens, once prosperous, but now ruined by the sand. These gardens formerly belonged to the chief of Djelfa. No roast mutton for luncheon! What joy! No *kous-kous!* What bliss! Grapes! figs! apricots! All these things were not very ripe. Nevertheless it was a treat from which, I think, we felt some ill effects. The water could have been bet-

ter; it was muddy and full of bugs. We scarcely touched it.

We all plunged into the reeds and went to sleep. A cold sensation woke me up with a start; an immense frog had just spit in my face. One must be very careful in this country and take care not to sleep in the first green spot across which one comes, especially if it is in the neighborhood of the sands, where the *léfaa,* or horned viper, swarms, whose bite is deadly and almost instantaneous. Often the agony does not even last an hour. This reptile is very slow, and only becomes dangerous if he is stepped on, or if one is lying near him. If a person comes across one on his path he can even, with practice and care, take him in the hand by seizing him rapidly behind the ears. I did not permit myself this pastime.

This little and terrible creature lives in the alfalfa, rocks, or any place where it can find shelter. When one sleeps on the ground for the first time, one thinks of nothing else but this reptile, but gradually one thinks no more about it. As for scorpions, they are despised. They are as common there as our spiders with us. Whenever we would see one near our camp we would surround it with a circle of dried grass, to which we would set fire. The crazed beast, knowing itself lost, would lift its tail, bring it around its head in a circle, and sting itself to death. I had been assured that it killed itself, for I always saw it die in the flame.

This is how I saw the horned viper for the first time: One afternoon as we were crossing an immense alfalfa plain, my horse gave signs of uneasiness. He would lower his head, snort, stop, he seemed suspicious of every patch of grass. I am, I

must admit, a very bad horseman, and these sudden stops, besides filling me with doubt as to my stability, would throw me suddenly against the enormous pommel of my saddle. The lieutenant, my companion, laughed heartily. Suddenly my beast made a leap, and began to look down on the ground at something which I could not see, obstinately refusing to advance. Foreseeing a catastrophe, I preferred to dismount, and I looked for the cause of this action. Before me was a little patch of alfalfa. I struck in it at random with my stick, and suddenly a little reptile ran out and disappeared in the neighboring plant. It was a *léfaa*.

The evening of this very day, in a rocky, barren plain, my horse once more began to shy. I jumped to the ground, convinced that I was going to find another *léfaa*. But I saw nothing. Then, as I moved the stone, a big spider, as yellow as the sand, thin, extremely rapid, escaped and disappeared under a rock before I could reach it. A spahi who had joined me called it a "scorpion of the wind," a term meant to express its rapidity. It was, I believe, a tarantula.

One night, while I was sleeping, something icy touched my face. I jumped up with a start; but the sand, the tent, everything was hidden in the darkness. I could distinguish nothing but the big white spots made around me by the sleeping Arabs. Had I been bitten by a *léfaa* which was crawling near me? Was it a scorpion? Whence came this clammy contact with my face? Anxiously I lit a lantern. I looked around ready to strike the animal with my heel, and I saw a monstrous white toad, one of these fantastical toads which one meets in the desert. It was squatting there, puffed up, its feet spread apart,

looking at me. The horrible beast had probably found me in its usual path and had bumped against my face.

As revenge I forced it to smoke a cigarette. He died from it. Here is the method of procedure: his narrow mouth is pried open and a cigarette, rolled very small, is introduced into it and then lighted. The animal chokes and blows in order to get rid of this instrument of torture, and then, willy nilly, it is forced to inhale. Then he blows again, puffed up, expiring and ludicrous; he must continue thus until the end, unless one takes pity on him. He usually dies swollen up like a balloon.

Strangers are often shown a desert sport which consists of pitting a *léfaa* against on *ouran*, a species of lizard. Who of us, while traveling in southern climes, has not met these poor little lizards without a tail crawling along old walls? At first we wonder what is the mystery of these missing tails. Then, one day, as we were reading in the shade of a tree we saw a viper dart from a crack in the wall and spring toward the gentle little lizard, sunning himself on a rock. The lizard tries to escape; the reptile, more rapid, has seized it by its long tail, and half of this organ remains between the sharp teeth of the enemy, while the mutilated little beast disappears in a hole.

Well, the *ouran* is nothing other than the sand crocodile mentioned by Herodotus, a kind of large Sahara lizard, which avenges its race on the terrible *léfaa*.

The battle between these animals is full of interest. It usually takes place in some old soap-box. The lizard is placed in it and begins to run around rapidly, trying to escape; but he becomes motion-

less as soon as the viper is dropped from its bag into the box. Its eye alone moves rapidly. Then he takes a few quick steps as though to slip up to the enemy, and he waits. The *léfaa,* in the meantime, watches the lizard, scenting danger, and prepares for battle; then suddenly it leaps forward, but the other has already jumped aside and is racing around so quickly that it can hardly be seen. He now returns with surprising rapidity and attacks. The *léfaa* has turned around and is holding his jaws open, ready to deliver the fatal sting. But the lizard has already rushed by him and is watching him from the other end of the box.

This lasts fifteen or twenty minutes, sometimes longer. The *léfaa,* exasperated, grows angry and crawls toward the *ouran,* which continually runs away, quicker than the eye, returns, twists, stops, starts, tires out and maddens its fearful adversary. Then suddenly, choosing the right moment, he attacks so quickly that one can only see the viper convulsed and strangled by the strong triangular jaws of the lizard, who has seized him by the neck, right behind the ears, just where the Arabs do.

On seeing this battle of these two creatures in the bottom of a soap-box one thinks of the Spanish bullfights in the imposing arenas. It would be much more dangerous to disturb these tiny reptiles than to face the noisy anger of the horned beasts of the ring.

In the Sahara one often sees a horrible-looking snake, sometimes over a yard long and not much thicker than the little finger. In the neighborhood of Bou-Saada this harmless reptile inspires the Arabs with a superstitious terror. They claim

that he can pierce the hardest bodies like a bullet and that nothing can stop him when he perceives a brilliant object. An Arab told me that his brother had been pierced by one of these beasts, who had also bent his stirrup at the same time. It is probable that the man had been shot by a bullet just as he noticed the snake.

In the neighborhood of Laghouat, on the contrary, this snake is not in the least feared and children take it in their hands.

The thought of all these dangerous inhabitants of the desert notably disturbed my slumbers in the reeds of Raïane-Chergui. Any rustling near my ears made me sit up with a start.

Night was falling; I awoke my companions in order to take a walk in the dunes and try to find some *léfaa* or sandfish.

The animal called a sandfish and to which the Arabs give the name *dob* (pronounced *dôb*) is another large specimen of lizard which lives in a hole in the sand and whose meat is said to be fairly good. We often followed the tracks of one without being able to find it. One also meets in the sand another tiny insect whose customs are very curious: the ant-lion. They dig a funnel-shaped hole about the size of a five-franc piece, then they ambush themselves at the bottom and wait. As soon as a spider or any other insect slips on the rapid incline which they have made, they dash sand upon him, stun, blind, and force him to tumble to the bottom; then they seize and devour him.

That day the ant-lion was our greatest recreation. Evening brought back the roast mutton, *kous-kous* and sour milk. When meal times came near I often thought of home.

Then we lay down on the rugs before the tents, as the heat was too intolerable to remain beneath them. We have before and behind us these two strange neighbors: the sand, as rough as a stormy sea, and the salt, as smooth as a calm lake.

The following day we crossed the dunes. It was like an ocean turned to dust during a hurricane; a silent storm of enormous, motionless waves of yellow sand. These uneven waves are as high as hills, crested and heaving like billows, but much higher, and striated like moire. On this furious, silent and motionless sea the scorching southern sun casts down its pitiless rays.

One must climb over these waves of golden ashes, tumble down the other side, climb up again, and again, without rest or shade. The horses choke, fall knee deep, and slip down the other side of these strange hills.

We could no longer talk, overcome by heat and parched by thirst like this burning desert.

At times, it is said, one is surprised in these valleys by an incomprehensible phenomenon which the Arabs consider to be a sure sign of death. Somewhere near one, from an indefinite direction, a drum beats, the mysterious drum of the dunes. It beats distinctly, sometimes louder, sometimes fainter, stopping and then taking up again its fantastical roll.

It seems that no one knows the cause of this surprising noise. It is usually attributed to the echo, increased, and multiplied, and greatly inflated by the undulations of the dunes, of grains of sand carried along by the wind and striking against patches of dry grass, for it has been noticed that this phenomenon always occurs in the neighborhood of lit-

tle plants burned by the sun and as hard as parchment.

This drum seems, therefore, to be a kind of sound-mirage.

As soon as we had left the dunes we noticed three horsemen galloping toward us. When they had arrived within about a hundred feet of us the leader jumped to the ground and came toward us with a slight limp. He was a man of about sixty, fairly stout (a thing seldom seen in this country), a harsh expression, sharp, deeply lined features. He wore the cross of the Legion of Honor. His name was Si Cherif-ben-Vhabeizzi, chief of the Oulad-Dia.

He made a long speech with a furious expression to invite us into his tent for refreshments.

This was the first time that I had entered into the tent of the nomad chief. A heap of gorgeous, curly woolen rugs covered the ground, other rugs were hung up to hide the bare canvas; others hung over our heads made a thick, impenetrable ceiling. Seats like divans, or rather thrones, were also covered with beautiful material; and a partition made of Oriental hangings cut the tent into two equal parts, separating us from the section inhabited by the women, whose voices we could at times overhear.

We sat down. The two sons of the chief took their places beside their father, who from time to time arose to say a word over the partition to the neighboring apartment; and an invisible hand would pass out a steaming dish which the chief would immediately offer us.

We could hear the little children playing and talking with their mothers. Who were these women? They were undoubtedly watching us, but we could not see them.

The Arabian woman is, as a rule, small, as white as milk, with the expression of a little lamb. She is modest only for her face. One sees working girls with their faces carefully veiled but with the body covered only with two strips of cloth falling one in front and one in back.

At fifteen these poor creatures, who ought to be pretty, are deformed and worn out by hard labor. They toil away from morning until night at every kind of work; sometimes they go to fetch water at a distance of several miles with a child on their backs. They appear old at twenty-five. Their faces, of which one gets an occasional glimpse, are tattooed with blue stars on their foreheads, cheeks and chins. One seldom sees the wives of rich Arabs.

As soon as the meal was over we left, and by evening we arrived at the salt rock of Khang-el-Melah. It is a kind of grayish-green mountain, with a bluish, metallic reflection and peculiar ridges. A mountain of salt! Water, by far more salty than of the ocean, escapes from the base and, evaporating in the scorching heat of the sun, it leaves on the ground a white froth—a foam of salt! The ground is covered under a light powder, as though some giant had amused himself scraping this mountain in order to sprinkle the dust about it. Large blocks, broken off, lie in the hollows—blocks of salt!

It seems that under this extraordinary rock are exceedingly deep wells inhabited by thousands of doves.

The following day we arrived at Djelfa. This is an ugly little town built after the French style, but occupied by most agreeable officers who made our stay there very pleasant.

After a short rest we started out again. We

began again our long journey through barren plains. From time to time we met herds of sand-colored sheep. Sometimes, far off in the horizon, we discerned strange-looking beasts, which in the distance looked small and who, with their hunched backs, long curved necks, slow movements, look like a flock of enormous turkeys. Then, on coming nearer, we recognized them for camels with their enormous bodies swollen out at both sides like a double balloon, like a giant gourd, as their stomachs are said to contain as much as sixty litres of water. They, too, were of the same color as the desert, as are all beings born in these yellow solitudes. The lion, the hyena, the jackal, the toad, the lizard, the scorpion, even man himself, all take on the various shades of the charred ground, from the yellowish red of the shifting dunes to the stony gray of the mountains. And the little lark of the plains is so much the color of dust that it can only be seen when it flies away.

On what do these creatures subsist in these Arab countries?

During the rainy season these plains are covered with grass in a few weeks, then in a few days the sun dries and burns this rapid growth. Then these plants also assume the color of the ground; they break, crumble and scatter over the ground like finely chopped straw and are no longer recognizable. But the animals know how to discover these remains and they live on them. They walk along looking for this powder of dried grass. They seem to be eating pebbles. What would a farmer in Normandy think of these pasture-lands?

We next crossed a region where even birds were scarce and where springs were not to be found. In

the distance we could see strange little columns of dust which looked like smoke, some straight, some leaning or bent, and running along the ground, a few yards high, wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. Gusts of wind raise and carry along these strange, transparent clouds, which are the only things showing any sign of movement in these lonesome stretches.

Five hundred yards ahead of our little troop rode a horseman guiding us through this dreary and even solitude. He would walk his horse for ten minutes, motionless on his saddle and singing in his native language a slow chant with the strange rhythm of those lands. We followed his pace. Then suddenly he would break into a trot, his body hardly shaken at all, the wide folds of his burnous fluttering behind him, standing straight in his stirrups. We would follow along behind him until he stopped to follow a slower pace. I asked my neighbor:

"How can he guide us through these barren lands without any marks for him to go by?"

"He follows the remains of camels," he answered.

True enough, every so often he would come across a few enormous bones, half eaten by the beasts of prey, bleached by the sun, and which made a white spot on the sand. Sometimes it was a piece of a leg, or a jaw bone, or part of a spinal column.

"Where do all these carcasses come from?" I asked.

"The caravans leave behind them every animal which cannot keep up with the rest; and the jackals do not carry away everything," my neighbor answered.

For several days we have continued this monoto-

nous journey behind the same Arab, in the same order, always on horseback, hardly saying a word.

One afternoon just before we expected to arrive at Bou-Saada, I noticed before us a strangely shaped brown mass, the size of which was increased by the mirage. As we came nearer two vultures flew away. It was a carrion, still soft and covered with decayed blood, notwithstanding the heat. The chest alone remained; the other parts had undoubtedly been carried away by the ravenous scavengers.

"We have travelers ahead of us," said the lieutenant.

Several hours later we entered a kind of ravine, or pass, a scorching furnace with rocks jagged and pointed like a saw, which looked as though they were raging and rebelling against the pitiless sky. Another body was lying there; a jackal flew away at our approach.

Then again, just as we were coming out into a plain, a gray mass, stretched out before us, moved and slowly raised its head at the end of a long neck. It was a dying camel. He had been lying there on his side for perhaps two or three days, dying of thirst and fatigue. His long legs, which looked as though they were broken and inert, were stretched out on the burning sand, and he, seeing us come, raised his head like a signal. His forehead, eaten by the pitiless sun, was a running sore; his eyes followed us with a resigned look. He did not utter a single groan nor make the slightest effort to arise. One might think that, having seen so many of his brothers die the same way on these long journeys through the solitude, he knew full well the heartlessness of human beings. It was his turn, that was all. We passed on.

I turned around a long time afterward, and I noticed, raised up from the sand, the long neck of the abandoned creature, watching us disappear beyond the horizon, the last living things that it was ever to see.

An hour later we saw a dog cowering against a rock, mouth open, fangs bared, unable to make a motion, steadily watching two vultures which were standing beside him awaiting his death. He was so overcome by the fear of these patient birds eagerly awaiting his flesh that he did not look around, nor did he seem to feel the stones which a spahi threw at him as we were passing by.

Suddenly, just as we were leaving another pass, I saw before me the oasis.

It is an unforgettable sight. After just crossing endless plains, climbing steep, barren, parched mountains without meeting a tree, a plant, a green leaf, and here, before our very feet, we find an opaque mass of dark verdure, something like a lake of black foliage extending out over the sand. Then beyond this spot the desert starts again, stretching over to the endless horizon, where the earth mingles with the sky.

The city slopes down to the gardens. What cities they are, these cities of the Sahara! A collection and accumulation of cubes of mud dried in the sun. All these square huts of hardened mud are built one up against the other, leaving between their capricious lines a kind of narrow gallery like the passages dug by animals.

The whole town is built of diluted clay, which makes one think of the dwellings of animals, of the work of beavers, of work done without any other

tools than those which nature has given to creatures of an inferior order.

From place to place a magnificent palm tree rises about twenty feet above the ground. Suddenly we enter a forest whose paths are inclosed between high walls of clay. To the right and to the left, a mass of date trees open up their leaves like parasols over the gardens, sheltering with their thick and fresh shades the delicate fruit trees beneath. Under the shade of these giant palm trees, which the wind shakes like large fans, grow grapevines, apricot, fig, pomegranate trees and priceless vegetables.

The water from the river is kept in large reservoirs and is distributed to the inhabitants as is gas in our country. A strict account is kept of how much each person uses; and it is allowed to run through each person's trench for an hour or two each week, according to the extent of the property.

Wealth is reckoned by the number of palm trees possessed by each person. These trees are the guardians of life; they protect the sap of the other trees and stand continually with their roots in the water while the topmost branches are scorched by the fiery sun.

The valley of Bou-Saada, which brings the river to the gardens, is as wonderful as a land of dreams. Covered with date and fig trees, with wonderful plants, it descends between two mountains whose peaks are red. All along the rapid flowing little river Arabian women, with their heads veiled and their legs uncovered, wash their clothes by dancing on them. They roll them into a bundle, throw them into the current, and beat them down with their naked feet, balancing themselves gracefully.

Along this ravine the stream trickles and bab-

bles. When it leaves the oasis it is still abundant; but the desert which is awaiting it, the thirsty yellow desert, drinks it up at one gulp at the gates of the gardens, suddenly swallows it in its dried sands.

When one observes the city from the mosque, at sunset, the aspect is most peculiar. The flat, square roofs make a sort of cascade of mud chessboards or dirty handkerchiefs. On these the whole population moves about as they climb to the roof at sunset. In the streets one sees no one, one hears nothing, but as soon as one can catch a glimpse of several roofs, from some elevated spot, one sees an extraordinary movement. Supper is being prepared. Groups of ragged children swarm in the corners; this formless bundle of dirty clothes which represents the common Arabian woman is preparing the *kous-kous* or busy at some other occupation.

Night falls. Then the rugs of the Djebel-Amour are spread out on this roof, after carefully chasing away the scorpions, which multiply at a great rate in these huts; finally the whole family falls asleep in the open air under the mass of twinkling stars.

The oasis of Bou-Saada, although small, is one of the most delightful ones of all Algeria. In the neighborhood one can hunt the gazelle, which abounds here. There is also a great number of the fearful *léfaa* and even of the hideous, long-legged tarantula, the shadows of which one can see at night running along the walls of the cabins.

This village is quite a trade center, as it is on the road to Mozab.

The Mozabites and the Jews are the only two tradesmen, business men, and the only industrious people in all this part of Africa.

As soon as one advances southward the Jewish

race reveals itself under a hideous aspect which makes one understand the intense hatred of certain peoples for this nation, and even the recent massacres. The European Jews, the Algerian Jews, the Jews whom we know, with whom we come in contact every day, our neighbors and our friends, are men of the world, educated, intelligent, very often charming. And we grow indignant when we hear that the inhabitants of some unknown and distant little town have killed or drowned several hundred children of Israel. I am no longer surprised; for our Jews hardly resemble the Jews from over there.

At Bou-Saada one sees them crouching in filthy hovels, bloated and sordid, watching the Arab as a spider watches a fly. They call him, try to lend him five francs in consideration of a paper which he is to sign. The man knows the danger, hesitates, and does not wish to. But the desire for drink and other things urges him on. Five francs means so much pleasure to him!

At last he gives in and signs the greasy paper.

At the end of three months he will owe ten francs. A hundred francs at the end of the year, two hundred francs at the end of three years. Then the Jew sells his land, if he has any, or otherwise his camel, his horse, his mule, anything that he may own.

The chiefs, *caïds, aghas* or *bach'aghas,* fall equally well into the traps set by these rapacious creatures, who are the pest of our colony, the great obstacle to the civilization and well-being of the Arab.

When a French detachment makes an invasion into some rebellious tribe, a flock of Jews follows it, buying for a song the spoils which they sell back to the Arabs as soon as the soldiers are out of sight.

If, for instance, six thousand sheep are seized in some neighborhood, what can be done with these beasts? Lead them to the city? They would die on the way, for how could they be fed and watered during a journey of two hundred miles across these barren lands? And then, in order to take and keep such a convoy, it would be necessary to take along twice as many soldiers.

What is to be done? Kill them? What a massacre and what a loss! And then the Jews are there ready to buy the sheep at two francs a head, which are worth at least twenty. Anyhow the treasury will make twelve thousand francs. They let the animals go.

A week later, the first owners have bought back their sheep at three francs a head. Truly French vengeance is not expensive.

The Jew is master of all southern Algeria. There is, indeed, hardly an Arab without debts, for the Arab does not like to return things. He prefers to renew his note at one or two hundred per cent. He always thinks himself saved when he gains time. There ought to be a law passed to modify this deplorable state of affairs.

Throughout the south the Jew deals in hardly anything but usury, making use of the most dishonest methods. The real merchants are the Mozabites.

When one arrives at any village of the Sahara, one is immediately struck by a peculiar race of men who seem to have taken into their hands the business of the country. They alone have stores; they keep the European and local merchandise. They are intelligent and active and commercial to the backbone. They are the Beni-Mozad or Mozabites.

They have been nicknamed "the Jews of the desert."

The Arab, the true Arab, the man from the tent, for whom all work is dishonorable, despises the commercial Mozabite; but he comes at regular intervals to get his provisions from him; he intrusts to him the precious objects which he cannot carry with him in his roaming life. A sort of continual agreement seems to exist between them.

Thus the Mozabites have monopolized all the trade of northern Africa. They are to be found as much in our cities as in the Saharian villages. Then, his fortune made, the merchant returns to Mozab, where he must undergo a kind of purification before being allowed to regain his political rights.

These Arabs can be recognized by their size; they are smaller and stockier than the other tribes. Their faces are often flat and very broad, with thick lips, and their eyes are usually set deep under heavy, straight eyebrows. They are schismatic Mussulmans. They belong to one of the three dissenting sects of northern Africa, and they seem, according to some learned man, to be the actual descendants of the last of the Kharedji sect.

The country of these people is perhaps the strangest land in Africa.

Their fathers, expelled from Syria by the army of the Prophet, established themselves in the Djebel-Nefoussa, west of Tripoli in Barbary.

Successively repulsed from all points where they settled down, on account of the jealousy aroused as a result of their industry and intelligence, looked upon with suspicion on account of their faith, they settled down in the most barren, desolate and hottest country of all. In Arabian it is called Hammada

(overheated) and Chebka (net) because it resembles an immense network of black rocks.

The land of the Mozabites is situated at about one hundred miles from Laghouat.

This is how Commander Coyne, the man who knows best the southern portion of Algeria, describes his arrival at Mozab, in a most interesting pamphlet:

" About in the middle of the Chebka is a sort of arena formed by a belt of very shiny calcareous rocks sloping steeply to the inside. It is cut to the northwest and to the southwest by two deep gullies through which flows the Oued-Mozab. This arena is about ten miles long by one mile wide and incloses five of the cities of the federation of the Mozab, and the grounds which are exclusively cultivated into gardens by the inhabitants of this valley.

" Seen from the exterior and from the northern and eastern sides, this belt of rocks offers the aspect of a collection of tombstones placed one on top of the other without any special kind of order; one might think it an immense Arabian burial ground. Nature herself appears dead. There not a single trace of vegetation rests the eye; the birds of prey themselves seem to flee these desolate regions. Alone the fierce rays of the sun are reflected from these walls of a grayish rock, producing shadows of a fantastic design.

" Therefore, great is the astonishment, I might even say the enthusiasm, of the traveler when, from the crest of this line of rocks, he discovers, in the interior of the arena, five populous cities, surrounded by gardens of a luxurious vegetation, standing out in dark green against the reddish bed of the Oued-Mozab.

"Around him in the barren desert, death; at his feet lie the evident proofs of an advanced civilization."

Mozab is a republic, or rather a *commune* like that which the Parisian revolutionists of 1871 tried to establish.

No one in Mozab has the right to be idle, and the children, as soon as they are able to walk, help their fathers water the plants, which constitutes the principal occupation of the inhabitants. From morning till night the mule or the camel draws in leather buckets the water, which is then poured into trenches, ingeniously arranged so that not a drop of the precious liquid is lost.

Mozab contains besides this a great number of reservoirs for holding rain-water. It is, therefore, infinitely more advanced than our Algeria.

Rain means happiness, assured ease and a safe harvest for the Mozabites; therefore, as soon as it begins to fall, a kind of wildness takes hold of the inhabitants. They run out into the streets, discharge their guns, sing, run to the gardens, to the river, which begins to flow again, and to the dams, whose maintenance is assured by every citizen. As soon as the dam is threatened, every one must run to it.

These people, by their constant work, their industry, and their wisdom, made of the most savage and desolate part of the Saraha a living country, planted and cultivated, where seven cities prosper in the sun. Therefore, the Mozabite is very jealous of his fatherland, and prevents, as far as he can, any European from gaining admittance to it. In certain cities, like Beni-Isguem, no foreigner can sleep even for a single night.

They are their own police. No one would refuse to render assistance in case of necessity. There are in this country neither poor nor beggars. The needy are taken care of. Nearly every one can read and write.

Everywhere there are schools and large public buildings. Many Mozabites, after spending a short time in our cities, return to their own home knowing French, Italian, and Spanish.

Commander Coyne's pamphlet contains many interesting details about this curious little nation.

At Bou-Saada, just as in all the oases and towns, it is the Mozabites who carry on the trade and exchange, keep stores of every kind, and belong to all the professions.

After spending four days in this little city of the Sahara, I left for the coast.

The mountains which one meets on the way to the sea have a peculiar aspect. They look like enormous castles with miles of battlements. They are regular, square, and carved out as though by mathematical rule. The highest one is flat and appears to be inaccessible. Its shape has caused it to be called the "billiard-table." Some time before my arrival two officers climbed it for the first time. On the summit they found two enormous Roman cisterns.

THE KABYLIA—BOUGIE

HERE we are in the richest and most populous part of Algeria. The country of the Kabyles is mountainous, covered with forests and fields.

On leaving Aumale we descend toward the great valley of the Sahel. Over in the distance we see an immense mountain, the Djurjura. Its highest points are gray as though covered with ashes. On all the lower peaks one sees villages which look like a heap of white stones. Others cling to the sides. Throughout this fertile country there is a terrific struggle between the Europeans and the natives for the possession of the soil.

Kabylia has a greater population than the most thickly settled section of France. It is not nomadic, but sedentary and industrious. Therefore, the Algerian's one aim is to rob the native. Here are a

few of the systems used to drive away and despoil the unfortunate native landowners.

Some person, leaving France, goes to the office in charge of the distribution of lands and asks for a grant in Algeria. A hat containing a number of slips of paper is presented him; he draws a number corresponding to a section of land. Hereafter this lot belongs to him.

He leaves. Over there in a native village he finds a whole family settled on the concession which has been allotted to him. This family has prepared, tilled, and cultivated the soil on which it lives. It has nothing else to live on. The foreigner drives it away. It goes away resigned, since *this is French law.* But these people, without resource for the future, flee to the desert and become rebels.

Sometimes the foreigner makes an agreement with the native. The European, frightened by the heat and the aspect of the country, enters into negotiations with the Kabyle, who becomes his farmer. And the native who remains on *his own* land sends, no matter what his crops may yield, one thousand, fifteen hundred or two thousand francs to the European who has returned to France.

This is equal to a pension from the government.

Here is another method:

The House votes a credit of forty or fifty million francs to be used toward the colonization of Algeria. What will be done with this money? Perhaps they will build dams, or plant trees at the tops of the mountains in order to hold the water, or try to fertilize barren plains. Not in the least. The Arab will be dispossessed. Now in Kabylia land has reached quite a high value. The best is worth three thousand two hundred francs an acre; it ordinarily sells for

eight hundred francs. The native landowners lived quietly on the produce of their work. Once rich they do not revolt; all they ask is to be left in peace. What is the result? Fifty million francs are to be disposed of. Kabylia is the most beautiful country of Algeria. Well, the natives are dispossessed in favor of unknown colonists. How are they dispossessed? They are paid *eighty francs an acre* for land which is worth, at the lowest valuation, *sixteen hundred francs.* Then the head of the family goes away without a word (it is the law), anywhere, with all his people, the men, now idle, the women and the children.

These people are neither merchants nor manufacturers, they are only farmers. Therefore, the family lives as long as there is anything left of the ridiculous sum which was given them. Then comes misery. The men snatch up their guns and follow some chief like Bou-Amama in order to prove once more that Algeria can only be governed by a military head.

The principle seems to be: "We will leave the natives in the fertile sections as long as there is a scarcity of Europeans; then as soon as some come we will dispossess the original owners."

"Very well, but what do you expect to do when there are no longer any fertile sections?"

"We will fertilize artificially then!"

"Well, why do you not fertilize immediately, since you have an appropriation of fifty million?"

They see private companies building gigantic dams in order to supply water to whole sections; they see by the remarkable works of talented engineers that they would only have to plant forests on certain mountain tops in order to reclaim entire

districts below; and yet, they do not find another way except to dispossess the Arabs!

It is only fair to add that as soon as the Tell has been crossed the land becomes barren and arid, almost impossible to farm. Alone the Arab, who lives for a day on a pinch of flour and a few figs, can exist in this parched country. The European cannot make a living here. Therefore there are only a few restricted places which can be colonized, unless—the natives be driven away. That is what is being done.

In short, with the exception of the fortunate owners in the plain of the Mitidja, those who have obtained land in Kabylia by one of the above-mentioned methods, and in general with the exception of all who have settled along the coast, in the narrow stretch of land limited by the Atlas Mountains, the colonists are wretchedly poor. Algeria can only receive a limited number of foreigners. Only a few more can find a living there.

Moreover it is most difficult to govern this colony, for reasons that can readily be understood. As large as a European kingdom, Algeria is formed of regions most dissimilar, inhabited by populations of essentially different characters. This is a state of affairs which no government, up to the present time, has seemed to understand.

It is necessary to have a full knowledge of each section in order to pretend to govern it, for each one needs laws, regulations, provisions and precautions totally different from those of its neighbor. Now, the governor, whoever he may be, is fatally and completely ignorant of all these matters of details and customs; he must, therefore, depend entirely on his subordinates.

Who are these subordinates? Colonists? People brought up in the country, understanding all its needs? By no means! They are simply young men, almost youths, who come from Paris in the governor's following. Here we find one of these young ignoramuses governing fifty or a hundred thousand men. He makes one blunder after another and ruins the country. It is only natural.

There are, however, exceptions. Sometimes the all-powerful delegate of the government works, tries to learn and understand. It would take him at least ten years to begin to get at the bottom of things. After six months he is transferred. He is sent, for family, personal or other reasons, to the frontier of Tunis or Morocco. He arrives there and immediately begins to administer the country by the same methods which he was using over there, confident, in his superficial experience, that the same rules and regulations can be applied to these people so essentially different.

Therefore it is not so much a good governor that is needed, but above all a competent staff.

In order to remedy this deplorable state of affairs and these disastrous customs an attempt was made to found a school of administration where the elementary principles necessary for governing this country would be taught to a class of young men. The project failed. Those surrounding M. Albert Grévy undermined. Favoritism once more gained the upper hand.

The staff of the administrators is therefore recruited in a peculiar manner. True, it contains also some intelligent and hard-working men. When the government is short of candidates it usually makes advances to former officers in the Arabian service.

They at least know the natives thoroughly, but it is difficult to admit that their change of costume would immediately change their principles of administration; and we should not discharge them angrily as officers only to take them back when they put on civilians' clothes.

Since I have allowed myself to touch upon this delicate question of the administration of Algeria, I wish to add a few words about a subject of paramount importance which should be rapidly solved; it concerns the great native chiefs who are the only real, all-powerful administrators of that whole section of our colony included between the Tell and the desert.

At the beginning of the French rule the title of *agha* and also of *bach-agha* was conferred upon the chiefs who offered the best guaranty of loyalty and extended influence over the tribes of a large territory. Our strength would have been of no avail; for it we substituted that of the Arab chiefs won over to our cause, resigning ourselves in advance to possible treasons, which were fairly frequent. The measure was wise and diplomatic; taken all in all it gave good results. Certain *aghas* rendered us valuable assistance, and, thanks to them, the lives of perhaps thousands of French soldiers were saved.

But because a measure has once been excellent it does not follow that it remains perfect, notwithstanding all the modifications which time may bring to a country which is in the process of colonization. To-day the presence among the tribes of these potentates, alone respected and obeyed, is a cause of permanent danger to us and an unsurmountable obstable to the civilization of the Arabs. Neverthe-

less, the military party seems energetically to defend the system of the native chiefs against the tendency of the civil party to suppress them.

I am in no position to discuss such a serious question; but it is sufficient to take the trip which I took through the tribes in order clearly to perceive the enormous difficulties which might arise from the actual situation. Let me cite a few facts:

The long resistance of Bou-Amama is due almost entirely to the *agha* of Saïda.

At the beginning of the insurrection this agha with his soldiers was on his way to join the French troops. On the road he met the Trafis, who were traveling along with the same intention. They joined forces.

Now the *agha* of Saïda is loaded down with debts which he is unable to pay. The idea came to him, probably, to make a little raid during the night, for, gathering together his troop, he attacked the Trafis. The latter were at first beaten, but later on they gained the advantage and forced the *agha* of Saïda to flee with his men.

But, since the *agha* of Saïda is our ally, and, as he is the representative of French authority, our lieutenant, the Trafis persuaded themselves that we were behind the matter; and, instead of joining the French forces, they immediately went over to Bou-Amama, whom they never left and whose principal force they constituted.

The example is typical, is it not? And the *agha* of Saïda has remained our faithful friend. He marches under our flag!

Again, there is a celebrated *agha* whom our military authorities treat with the utmost consideration, because his influence extends over a large number

of tribes. Sometimes he helps us, sometimes he betrays us, according to whichever is the more to his advantage. Openly allied to the French from whom he holds his authority, he secretly lends his hand to every insurrection. Indeed, he forsakes either side for a chance to plunder.

After having undeniably had a hand in the murder of Colonel Beauprête, to-day he marches with us. But he is strongly suspected of having largely participated in many of the disasters which we have suffered.

Our firm ally, the *agha* of Frenda, has often warned us of the double play of this potentate. We turned a deaf ear because, although he may help our enemies, he also renders us military assistance.

This peculiar situation, the open protection with which we shield this chief, assures him immunity for a multitude of misdeeds which he daily commits. This is what happens:

Throughout the whole of Algeria the Arabs are continually robbing each other. Not a night goes by without notice being given that twenty camels have been stolen here, a hundred sheep there, that some cattle have been taken from near Biskra, some horses from Djelfa. The thieves are never to be found. And yet there is not an officer in the Arabian service who does not know where the stolen beasts are taken! They go straight to this *agha* who acts as "fence" for all the desert bandits. The stolen animals are placed in with his enormous herds; he keeps part of them for the price of his trouble and returns the others after a certain amount of time, when the danger of discovery has passed.

No one in the whole south ignores this state of affairs. But this man is needed, and his great in-

fluence grows every day through the assistance which he renders to all the miscreants. We close our eyes to his misdeeds.

Therefore this chief is immensely rich, while the *agha* of Djelfa, for instance, has almost ruined himself in the interest of colonization, by developing farms, clearing away the land, etc.

But besides these facts, any number of more serious results accrue from the presence among the tribes of these native rulers. In order fully to understand the matter, one should have an accurate idea of Algeria as it actually stands.

The territory and the population of our colony is very clearly divided. There are first of all the coast towns, which have scarcely more to do with the interior of Algeria than the cities of France themselves have to do with this colony. The inhabitants of these Algerian coast towns are essentially sedentary; they only feel the reaction of the events which happen in the territory; but their influence on the Arabian territory is absolutely nil.

The second zone, the Tell, is partly occupied by European colonists. Now, the colonist sees in the Arab only an enemy from whom land is to be wrested. He hates him instinctively, pursues him continually, and robs him when he can. The Arab retaliates in the same manner.

The quarrelsome hostility of the Arabs and the colonists is the cause that the latter can have no civilizing influence over the former. In this region things are not yet at the worst. The European element is continually tending to replace the native element; it will not be very long before the Arab, ruined or dispossessed, will take refuge farther south. Now, it is necessary that our conquered

neighbors keep the peace. For that we must make our authority felt at all times and, above all, see to it that our influence shall be the predominating one.

What happens to-day?

The tribes, scattered over an immense territory, never receive a visit of a European. Alone the officers, from time to time, make a round of inspection, and they are satisfied to ask the leaders what is happening in the tribe. But the leader is placed under the authority of the native chief, the *agha* or *bach-agha*. If this chief be from a noble and illustrious family, respected throughout the desert, then his influence is unlimited. All the leaders obey him just as they would have done before the French rule; and nothing that takes place ever comes to the ears of the military authorities.

The tribe is then a sealed book for us, through respect and fear of the *agha,* who continues the traditions of his ancestors in making all kinds of extortionate demands from his Arabian subjects. He is master and makes them give him whatever he wishes, sometimes one hundred, sometimes two hundred sheep, in short, he acts like a regular despot; and as he holds his authority from us, it is the continuation of the ancient Arabian system under the French government, hierarchical thievery, etc., etc., without taking into account the fact that we are nothing, and that we are absolutely ignorant of the state of the country.

It is entirely due to this situation that we never have anything but a faint suspicion of a rebellion, until just as it is breaking out.

Therefore, the presence of the great native chiefs indefinitely postpones the real and direct influence

of French authority on the tribes, which remain for us an unknown world.

What is the remedy? It is as follows: Almost all these chiefs, with the exception of two or three, are in need of money. They should be given an income of ten, twenty, thirty thousand livres for the influence and services which they have already rendered us and then they should be forced to live either in Algiers or in some other coast city. Certain military men claim that an insurrection would follow this measure. They probably have their own reason for claiming this. Other officers, living in the interior, maintain on the contrary that this would mean peace.

This is not all. These men would have to be replaced by public officials who would live constantly among the tribes and exercise a direct influence over the leader. In this manner, civilization might penetrate little by little into these lands, once this great obstacle is removed.

But useful reforms arrive as slowly in Algeria as they do in France.

While crossing Kabylia I had a proof of the complete powerlessness of our authority even among the tribes which live among the Europeans.

I was going toward the sea, following the long valley which leads from Beni-Mansour to Bougie. Before us, in the distance, a strange, heavy cloud hid the horizon. Over our heads the sky was of this milky blue which it takes on during the summer in these hot countries; but over there was a brownish yellow haze which seemed to be neither a storm, nor fog, nor one of these blinding sand-storms which pass with the fury of a hurricane, enveloping the whole country in its gray shadow. This heavy,

opaque cloud, almost black at its base and lighter toward the top, stretched across the broad valley like a wall. Then, in the still air, we suddenly noticed a vague odor of burnt wood. But what gigantic fire could produce such a mountain of smoke?

For it was indeed smoke. All the forests of Kabylia had taken fire. Soon we entered into a suffocating semi-darkness. We could not see a hundred yards ahead of us. The horses were breathing with difficulty. Night seemed to have come, and a barely perceptible wind, one of these slow breezes which scarcely moves the leaves was slowly pushing this floating night into the sea.

We waited two hours in a village for news; then we started out again as soon as real darkness had spread over the earth.

An uncertain light, still far away, was lighting the sky like a meteor. It grew and grew, lighting the horizon with a light which was more bloodlike than brilliant. But suddenly, at a sharp turn of the valley, I thought myself opposite an immense lighted city. It was an entire mountain already burned; the branches of the trees were cold while the trunks of the oaks and olive trees remained incandescent, enormous embers, smokeless, standing by the thousands like colossal lights on lengthy boulevards; squares, winding streets, appearing with the regularity or with the unevenness which one notices from the distance in a lighted city at night.

As we approached the great furnace the lights grew brilliant. During this one day the fire had burned twelve miles of forest.

When I saw the line of fire I stood there terrified and delighted before the most terrible and impres-

sive spectacle that I have ever seen. The fire was sweeping over an immense breadth like a wave. It was razing the country, continually advancing at a rapid pace. The bushes flared up and died out. The great trees burned slowly like torches waving in the air, while the short flame ran along the underbrush.

All night we followed this immense brazier. At daybreak we gained the sea.

Hemmed in by strange mountains with jagged crests, charming with their wooded slopes, lay the Gulf of Bougie, blue of a creamy blue, though clear, of an incredible transparency, it rounds itself out under the sky of a fixed azure.

At the end of the hill, to the left, on the steep side of the mountain, in a mass of greenery, the town tumbles down toward the sea like a stream of white houses.

When one enters it, it gives the impression of one of those dainty and improbable little stage cities, such as we sometimes dream of in visions of impossible lands.

It has Moorish houses, French houses and ruins everywhere, the kind of ruins which one expects to see before a canvas castle.

On arriving close to the water, on the wharf where the transatlantic steamers are moored, where are made fast the fishing boats from over there, with their sails which look like the wings of birds, we see, in the midst of a regular fairyland, ruins so magnificent that they seem unnatural. It is the old ivy-covered Saracen gate.

Everywhere in the wooded hills around the city are ruins, remains of Roman walls, pieces of Saracen monuments, relics of Arabian buildings.

The day passed by quiet and hot, then came night, and with it, all around the bay, a wonderful sight. As the shadows darkened another brilliancy than daylight filled the sky. The fire, like a besieging army, was surrounding the city and closing in upon it. New fires, lighted by the Kabyles, appeared from time to time and were beautifully reflected in the calm waters of the vast basin surrounded by the smouldering hills. At times the fire looked like a string of Venetian lanterns or the writhings of a twisting snake on the undulations of the mountains. At times it would flash forth like the eruption of a volcano with a brilliant center and an immense puff of red smoke, according as it was consuming stretches of underbrush or of tall old trees.

I remained six days in this flaming country, then I left by the matchless road which follows along the gulf, and the forest-covered mountains, and the golden sands bathed in the quiet water of the Mediterranean.

At times the fire reached down to the road. Then we would have to jump out of the carriage to remove the burning trees which had fallen across our path, or otherwise we would gallop along between two walls of fire, one descending to the bottom of a deep ravine where rushed a seething torrent, the other climbing to the top of a mountain, laying waste everything in its path. Hills already burned and extinguished looked as though they were covered with a black veil, a veil of mourning. Then again we crossed countries still intact. Anxious colonists, standing in their doorways, ask for news of the fire just as, at the time of the German war in France, people asked for information about the advance of the enemy.

We saw jackals, hyenas, foxes, hares, hundreds of different animals fleeing before this plague, maddened by the fear of the flame.

At a bend in the valley I suddenly saw five telegraph wires so loaded down with swallows that they bent strangely, forming between each post five garlands of birds. The driver snapped his long whip, a cloud of swallows flew away and scattered through the air; the heavy wires, suddenly released, leaped up like the string of a bow. They vibrated thus for a long time.

Soon we penetrated into the gorges of the Chabet-el-Akhra. Leaving the sea to our left, we entered the opening in the mountain. This pass is one of the most gorgeous in the world. The cut often narrows down; barren granite peaks, reddish, brown or blue, come closer, leaving at their base only a narrow opening for the water. The road is nothing more than a narrow cornice carved in the rock itself, over the foaming torrent.

The aspect of this barren gorge, wild and superb, is continually changing. The two inclosing walls sometimes rise to a height of seven thousand feet; and the sun can only penetrate to the bottom of this well when it is exactly over it.

At the further end we arrive at the village of Kerrata. For a week the inhabitants have been watching the black smoke of the fire issue from the sombre pass as from a gigantic chimney.

The Algerian government claim after this disaster, which it could easily have avoided with a little foresight and energy, that it did not originate from the Kabyles. It also maintained that the devastated forests did not amount to more than one hundred thousand acres.

Here is a despatch from the sub-prefect of Philippeville:

"I have been informed by the mayor and administrator of Jemmapes that all the forest lands have been burned to the ground and that the fire has destroyed all the villages of the mixed community. The villages of Gastu, Aïn-Cherchar, and Djendel have been threatened.

"At Philippeville all the trees have been burned.

"Stora, Saint-Antoine, Valée, Damrémont, almost all fell prey to the flames.

"At El-Arrouch there has been little waste outside of a thousand acres burned in the villages of the Oulad-Messaoud, Hazabra, and El-Ghedir.

"At Saint-Charles about twelve hundred acres were burned between the Oued-Deb and the Oued-Goudi, and sixteen hundred acres to the northeast and southeast. Forage and huts destroyed.

"At Attia and the mixed village Collo the fire laid waste everything.

"The concessions of Teissier, Lesseps, Levat, Lefebre, Siber, Besin, etc., are partly or totally destroyed. More than eighty thousand acres of woodland went with them. The farms and houses of the Zeriban have been consumed by the flames. There have been numerous human victims.

"This morning we buried three Zouaves, who died near Valée in the discharge of their duty.

"The damage is enormous and cannot even be given approximately.

"The danger has disappeared to a great extent through the destruction of the forest. The wind has also changed its direction, and I believe that we shall be able to master the last fires, namely those on the properties of Besson, Collo, and at the Estaya near Robertville.

"Yesterday I requisitioned a passing steamer and sent one hundred and fifty men to Collo."

Let us add to this the forest fires of the Zeramna, Fil-Fila, Fendeck, etc.

M. Bisern, for forty years contractor for the forest of El-Milia, wrote the following:

"My staff gave proof of the greatest energy; it ran the greatest danger, and twice we were able to master the flames. But all this was useless. While we were fighting the fire on one side, the Arabs were lighting it in many different places on the other side."

Here is a letter from a landowner:

"I have the honor of announcing to you that toward the middle of the night from Sunday to Monday, my farmer, Ripeyere, on watch over my property, situated above the drill ground, saw four attempts of arson: one in the public grounds, another a few hundred yards from my property, a third near Damrémont, and the last at Valée. The wind died down and the fire was unable to spread."

Here is a despatch from Djidjelli:

"Djidjelli, August 23, 3:16 P. M.

"The fire is destroying the forest concession of the Beni-Amram belonging to M. Edouard Carpentier of Djidjelli.

"Last night it was started in twenty different places; a laborer coming from the mine of Cavalho distinctly saw all the fires.

"This morning, almost under the very eyes of the Calid Amar-ben-Habilès of the tribe of the Beni-Foughal, the fire was set to the canton of Mezrech; a quarter of an hour later it was starting at another point in the same canton, in a direction contrary to that of the wind.

"Finally, in the same instant, about four hundred feet away from where the chief was standing with fifty Arabs of his tribe, another fire broke out, still with the wind in the opposite direction.

"It is therefore evident that the fire was started by the native population and in obedience to a given signal."

I might add that, having myself spent a week in the middle of the fire-ravaged country, one evening I saw, with my own eyes, the fire spring simultaneously from eight different points in the middle of a forest, five miles from any human habitation.

It is certain that, if we kept a stricter watch over

the native tribes, these disasters, which are repeated every four or five years, would not happen.

The government seems to think that it has done all that is necessary when, as the season of great heat approaches, it has renewed the instruction concerning the patrolling of forests given in Article 4 of the ordinances of July 17, 1874. This section runs as follows:

"The native population in forested regions, during the period between July 1 and November 1, are compelled, under penalty of Article 8, to exercise particular vigilance and to stand watch at a post which shall be assigned by the Governor-General."

We suspect the natives of wishing to set fire to the forests, and then we confide them to their care!

Is not this an example of monumental stupidity?

This order was undoubtedly punctiliously executed. Each native was at his post—only—he set fire.

True, another clause orders a special watch to be exercised by an officer appointed by the Governor-General. This order received little or no attention.

Let us add that the Forest Administration, which is probably the most quarrelsome one of all the Algerian departments, generally does all that it can to exasperate the natives.

Finally, in order to return to the question of colonization, the government, in order to help the establishment of Europeans, makes use of the most unjust method against the Arab. Why should not the colonists follow an example which agrees so well with their interests?

I must add, however, that in the last few years men of considerable capacity, experts in all questions of culture, seem to have directed the colony

into a decidedly better channel. Algeria is becoming productive as a result of the efforts of these men. The population which is now in the process of formation no longer works only in the interest of personal gain, but also for the welfare of France.

It is certain that the land will yield much more when in the hands of these men than it ever would have if cultivated by the Arabs; it is also certain than the native population will eventually disappear little by little; this disappearance will undoubtedly prove most useful to Algeria, but it is revolting to think under what conditions it is occuring.

CONSTANTINE

FROM Chabet to Sétif is like crossing a golden land. The crops are cut high and not mown flat and trampled upon by the cattle as in France; they mingle their light straw-yellow to the darker red of the earth and give to the ground exactly that warm tint of old gold.

Sétif is one of the ugliest towns it is possible to see.

Then we cross over endless plains to Constantine. Patches of green here and there make them look like a pine table over which had been scattered toy trees out of a Noah's ark.

Here is Constantine, the phenomenal city, Constantine the strange, guarded by a serpent writhing at its feet, the Roumel, that fantastic stream of the poem, which might have been dreamed of by Dante, flowing at the bottom of an abyss, as red as though the eternal flames had scorched it. This jealous and surprising river makes an island of its city. It surrounds it with a winding and terrible whirlpool, with glistening and strange rocks and straight walls.

The Arabs say that the city resembles a burnous

spread out. They call it Belad-el-Haoua, the city of the air, the city of the ravine, the city of passions. It overlooks wonderful valleys full of Roman ruins, aqueducts with giant arcades, covered with a wonderful vegetation. Above it are the heights of Mansoura and of Sidi-Mecid.

It stands like a queen, on its river-encircled rock. It is glorified by an old saying: "Bless the memory of your ancestors," it says to the inhabitants, "who built your city on a rock. You look down on those who would look down on you."

The crowded streets are even more lively than those of Algiers, swarming with light, continually crossed by the strangest of people, by Arabs, Kabyles, Biskris, Mozabs, negroes, veiled Moorish women, red spahis, blue Turcomans, solemn-looking cadis, brilliantly uniformed officers. Merchants drive before them their asses, those little African animals as high as dogs; horses, slow and majestic camels.

Hail to the Jewesses! Here they are of a superb, severe and charming beauty. They pass by draped rather than clothed, draped in brilliant cloth with a matchless knowledge of what effects and shades best bring out their beauty. They walk around with their arms naked from the shoulder, the arms of a statue, which they boldly expose to the sun as they do their calm faces with the pure straight lines. The sun seems powerless to affect this polished skin.

The charming thing about Constantine is the crowd of dainty little girls, tiny ones. Dressed up as though for a fancy-dress ball in trailing blue or red silk dresses, wearing over their heads long golden or silver veils, their eyebrows penciled into a long arch over their eyes, their nails tinted, their cheeks sometimes tattooed with a star, with a bold

and already provoking stare, conscious of admiration, they trot along, giving their hand to some tall Arab, their servant.

One might think that they had just stepped out of some fairy-tale, a nation of little *femmes galantes;* for they look like women, these little girls, women by their dress, by their awakening coquettishness, by the expressions on their faces. They already use their eyes like the oldest ones; they are charming, troubling, and irritating like adorable monsters. One might think that they were a school of ten-year-old courtesans, seeds of love just budding.

Here we are before the palace of Hadj-Ahmed which is supposed to be one of the most perfect examples of Arabian architecture. Every traveler has extolled it, compared it to the dwellings of the "Arabian Nights."

There would be nothing remarkable about it were it not for the interior gardens, which give to it a very pretty Oriental effect. It would take a whole volume to relate the misdeeds and crimes of the man who built it with the precious materials stolen and torn from the rich dwellings of the city and its suburbs.

The Arabian quarter of Constantine takes up a half of the town. The sloping streets are even narrower and more tangled than those of Algiers, and they go right down to the edge of the chasm where flows the Oued-Roumel.

Formerly eight bridges crossed this precipice. To-day six of them are in ruins. One single one, of Roman origin, still gives us an idea of what it used to be like. In spots the Roumel disappears under gigantic arches which it has dug for itself. The

bridge was built on one of these. The natural archway through which the river passes is forty-one metres high; it has a thickness of eighteen metres; therefore the foundations of the Roman construction are fifty-nine metres high. The bridge itself was two stories high, having two rows of arches superimposed on the gigantic arch of nature.

To-day a steel bridge of a single span admits one to Constantine.

But it is time for me to leave and start for Bône, a pretty little white city which reminds one of those to be found on the Mediterranean coast of France.

The *Kléber* is getting up steam along the wharf. It is six o'clock. As the steamer leaves the sun is sinking over there behind the desert.

I stay on deck until night with my eyes turned toward the land, which is disappearing behind a crimson cloud, in an apotheosis of the sinking sun, in a haze of golden pink, under the calm stretch of azure sky.

AT LOËCHE

Diary of the Marquis de Roseveyre

LOËCHE, *June 12, 1880.*

HAVE been ordered to spend a month at Loëche! Merciful heavens! To think of spending one whole month in this town which is said to be the gloomiest, the deadliest, the most tiresome of all the watering places! What am I saying, a town? It is a hole, scarcely even a village! In short, I have been condemned to a month in the penitentiary!

June 13.—I dreamed all night about this frightful trip. I have just one thing left to do. I must take a companion with me! That might help me pass the time. And then this will also give me the chance to find out whether or not I am prepared for married life.

A month in *tête-à-tête* with a woman, just we two, with long talks at any time of day or night! The deuce!

True, it is not as serious to take a woman for a month as to take her for a lifetime, but it is much

more serious than to take her for a shorter time. Of course I could always provide for her and send her away; but then I would be left alone in Loëche, a thing which I would not in the least relish!

The choice will be difficult. I wish neither a coquette nor a fool. I do not wish to be made ridiculous nor to be ashamed of her. I am willing that people should say: "The Marquis de Roseveyre is in luck," but I do not want them to whisper: "That poor Marquis de Roseveyre!" On the whole, I want my temporary companion to have all the qualities which I shall demand of my permanent companion. The only difference there is to be made is the same which exists between a new article and one bought at a bargain. Bah! It is easy enough to find, if one takes the trouble to look!

June 14.—Bertha! . . . The very person! Twenty! Twenty, pretty, just graduated from the Conservatoire, waiting for a part, a future star. Good manners, a proud bearing, wit and . . . love! A bargain which can easily pass for a new article.

June 15.—She is free! She accepts, having no business or other engagements. I myself ordered her gowns, in order to be sure that she would not look common.

June 20.—Basle. She sleeps. I will begin my traveling notes.

She is quite charming. When she met me at the station, I did not recognize her; she looked like a woman of the world. That child certainly has a future ahead of her . . . on the stage.

Her manners seemed entirely changed; her walk, bearing, gestures, smile, voice, everything was irreproachable. Her hair was dressed divinely, in a charming and simple manner, like a woman who no

longer has to attract attention and please every one, but who wishes to be agreeable in a discreet manner to one only. Everything about her showed this. It was so delicately and completely indicated, the change seemed to me so clever and complete that I offered her my arm just as I would have done to my wife. She took it with ease, as though she were really such.

Alone in the train we first sat motionless and silent. Then she lifted her veil and smiled. . . . Nothing more. A well-bred smile. Oh! I feared the embrace, the comedy of tenderness, the eternal and hackneyed game of women of her kind; but she controlled herself. She is very clever. We conversed a little like married people, a little like strangers. She was charming. She often smiled when she looked at me. It was I who now felt like kissing her. But I remained calm.

At the frontier an official covered with braid quickly opened the door, and asked me:

"Your name, Monsieur?"

I was surprised. I answered:

"Marquis de Roseveyre."

"Where are you going?"

"To the baths at Loëche, in the Valais."

He wrote all this down, and then continued:

"Is Madame your wife?"

What was to be done? What could I answer? I hesitated and lifted my eyes to her. She was pale and looking out in the distance. . . . I felt that I might shame her needlessly. And then, she was to be my companion for a month.

I answered: "Yes, Monsieur."

I saw her suddenly blush. I was pleased.

When I arrived here at the hotel the proprietor

held out the register to her. She immediately passed it to me, and I knew that she was watching me write. It was our first evening of intimacy! . . . Once the page turned over, who would read this register? I wrote: "Marquis and Marquise de Roseveyre, on their way to Loëche."

June 21.—Basle, 6 a. m. We are leaving for Bern. I have certainly been lucky.

June 21.—10 p. m. What a strange day it has been! I am quite moved. How foolish and ridiculous!

During the trip we spoke but little. She had risen early and was tired; she was dozing.

As soon as we reached Bern we wished to see the panorama of the Alps, which I did not know at all; we started out through the town like a new-married couple.

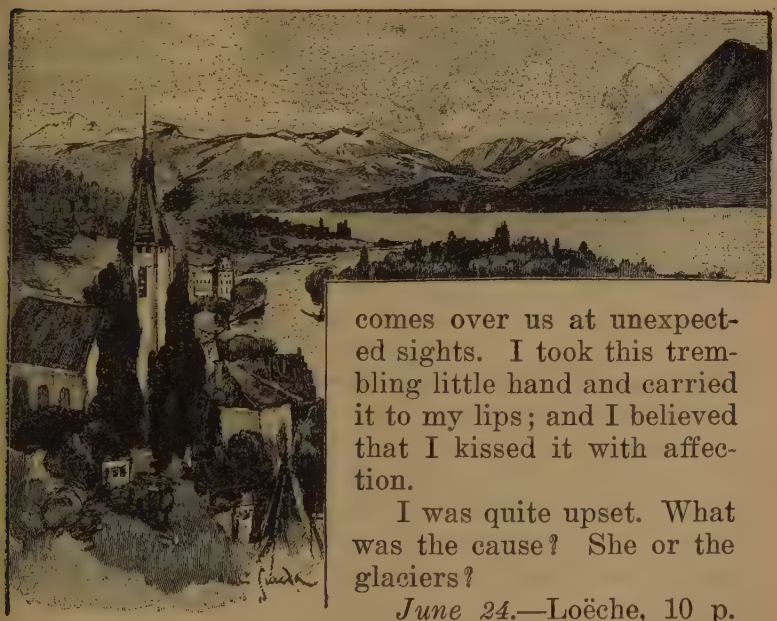
Suddenly we perceived an immense plain, and away over there, far away in the distance, the glaciers. Seen from the distance like that they did not look immense, and yet this view thrilled me. A glorious setting sun was shining down upon us; the heat was intense. Yet those mountains of ice remained cold and white. The Jungfrau, the Virgin, towering over her brothers, with her broad side stretched toward us, and all around her the snow-capped giants raised their heads, seeming ever paler in the dying day, standing out like silver against the azure sky.

Their gigantic and motionless mass gave me the impression of a new and surprising world, of steep regions, dead and frozen, but as fascinating as the sea, full of a mysterious power and seduction. The air which has caressed these ever-frozen heights seemed to come to us across the blossoming country,

different from that of the field. It contained something harsh, strong, and sterile, like the flavor of inaccessible regions.

Bertha, bewildered, was looking on, without pronouncing a word.

Suddenly she took my hand and pressed it. I myself felt a kind of fever, this exaltation which



comes over us at unexpected sights. I took this trembling little hand and carried it to my lips; and I believed that I kissed it with affection.

I was quite upset. What was the cause? She or the glaciers?

June 24.—Loëche, 10 p. m. The whole trip was delightful. We spent a half a day at Thun, looking over the delightful outline of the mountains, which we were to cross the following day.

At sunset we crossed the lake, probably the most beautiful one in Switzerland. Mules were waiting for us. We mounted them and started off. We breakfasted in a little town and then began the

ascent of the narrow wooded forge, continually overlooked by high peaks. From time to time, on the slopes which seemed to come down from heaven, we could distinguish little white spots, little Swiss cottages, clinging there, no one knows how. We crossed torrents, and, at times, between two pine-covered peaks we would see an immense pyramid of snow, which looked as though it were near enough to reach in twenty minutes and yet which was at least twenty-four hours distant.

Sometimes we crossed narrow little plains littered with rocks, as though two mountains had clashed in this arena and had left on this battle-field these remains of their granite limbs.

Bertha, exhausted, was sleeping on her animal, occasionally opening her eyes to see where she was. Finally she slept, and I supported her with my arm, happy to feel this contact of her warm body. Night came; we were still climbing. We stopped before the door of a little inn, lost in the mountains.

How we slept that night!

At daybreak I ran to the window, and uttered a cry. Bertha followed me, and we stood there, surprised and delighted. We had slept in the snows.

All about us enormous, barren mountains, whose gray bones showed through their white cloaks, mournful, frozen mountains without a tree, rose so high that that seemed inaccessible.

An hour after starting out we perceived, at the bottom of the funnel of granite and snow, a black, gloomy lake without a ripple, which we followed for a long time. A guide brought us a few edelweiss, the pale flowers of the glaciers. Bertha pinned them to her waist.

Suddenly the rocky gorge opened out before us,

uncovering a wonderful view: the whole stretch of the Piedmontese Alps beyond the valley of the Rhône. High peaks overlooked the lesser heights. There was Mount Rose, solemn and heavy; the Cervin, that straight pyramid where so many men have died; the Dent du Midi, and a hundred other white points, sparkling like diamonds under the white sun.

Suddenly the path which we had been following stopped at the edge of a precipice, and far down, at the bottom of the black hole, seven thousand feet deep, inclosed in four walls of straight, brown, stern rocks, on a field of grass, we noticed a few white specks, like sheep in a field. They were the houses of Loëche.

The road being dangerous, we were forced to dismount from the mules. The path descends along the rock, winding, twisting, and turning, always overlooking the precipice and the village, which grows as we come nearer. This is known as the pass of the Gemmi, one of the most beautiful if not *the* most beautiful of the Alps.

Bertha was leaning on me, uttering little cries of joy and fear, happy and timid as a child. Once, when we were a few feet behind the guide and hidden by an outjutting rock, she kissed me. I held her close. . . .

I had said to myself:

"At Loëche I will take care to let it be understood that I am not with my wife."

But everywhere that we have been I had treated her as such, and she had passed for the Marquise de Roseveyre. At this late date I could scarcely register her under another name. And then, I would have offended her, and really she was charming.

But I said to her:

"My dear, you are bearing my name; I am thought to be your husband; I expect you to act with extreme caution and discretion. Don't make friends, or talk, or gossip. Let people think that you are proud and act so that I may not have to regret the step which I have taken."

She answered:

"Never fear, my little René."

June 26.—Loëche is not at all dismal. It is wild, but very beautiful. This wall of rocks seven thousand feet high, from which spring a hundred different torrents like ribbons of silver; this constant noise of rushing water; this village buried in the Alps, from which one looks up to the sun as from the bottom of a deep well; the neighboring glacier, so white in the notch in the mountain, and this valley, full of brooks, full of trees, of freshness and of life, which descends toward the Rhône and shows in the distance the snowy peaks of the Piedmont: all this thrills and charms me. Perhaps . . . if Bertha were not here? . . .

This child is a gem, more reserved and distinguished than any one. I hear people saying:

"That little Marquise is truly charming!" . . .

June 27.—First bath. One goes directly from the room to the pool, where twenty bathers, clad in long woolen robes, are already dipping in the water, men and women together. Some eat, some read, some talk. We push before us little floating tables. Sometimes we play tag, which is not entirely proper. Seen from the galleries which surround the bath, we look like enormous toads in a tub. Bertha sat in this gallery and talked to me a little. Everybody looked at her.

June 28.—Second bath. I spent four hours in the water. In a week I will spend eight hours there. As co-plungers I have the Prince of Vanoris (Italy), Count Lovenberg (Austria), Baron Samuel Vernhe (Hungary or elsewhere), plus about fifteen persons of less importance, but all noble. In watering-places everybody is noble. One after the other they asked to be introduced to Bertha. I answer: "Yes!" and slip away. They think me jealous; how foolish!

June 29.—Consternation! Princess Vanoirs herself came up to me as we were returning to the hotel and asked to meet my wife. I introduced Bertha, but I asked her to avoid this lady as much as possible.

July 2.—The Prince collared us yesterday and brought us to his apartments, where all the bathers of note take tea. Bertha was certainly more charming than any of the other women. What can I do?

July 3.—After all, I can't help it! Among these thirty noblemen there must be at least ten imaginary ones! Among these sixteen or seventeen women are there more than twelve of them who are really married; and among thse twelve are there more than six of them above reproach? So much the worse for them, so much the worse for them! They wished it!

July 10.—Bertha is the queen of Loëche! Everybody is wild about her; they adore her and spoil her! She is superb, graceful, and distinguished. Everybody envies me. Princess Vanoris asked me:

"Tell me, Marquis, where did you find that treasure?"

I felt a strong desire to answer:

"First prize at Conservatoire, engaged at the Odéon, free after August 5, 1880!"

Heavens! How she would have looked if I had said that!

July 20.—Bertha is truly surprising! Never has she failed to show the proper tact or taste; she is a wonder!

* * * * * * *

August 10.—Paris. All is over! I feel sad. The day before our departure I thought that every one would cry.

We had decided to watch the sun rise from the Torrenthorn, then to come back before leaving. We started out on mules toward night. The guides were carrying lanterns. The long cavern straggled along the winding path through the pine forest. Then we crossed through pasture lands, where herds of cows roam around at large. Then we reached the stony region, where even grass no longer grows.

At times, through the darkness, we could distinguish, either to the right or to the left, a white mass, a heap of snow piled up in a crevasse in the mountain.

The cold was becoming biting, stinging the eyes and the skin. The dry wind of the heights was blowing, drying our throats and bringing with it the icy breath of hundreds of snowy peaks.

When we arrived at the summit it was still night. We unpacked all the provisions so that we could drink champagne to the rising sun.

The sky was growing lighter. We could already see a gulf at our feet, and then, a short distance away, another peak.

The whole horizon seemed livid, without our being able to distinguish anything in the distance.

Soon, to the left, we discovered an enormous peak, the Jungfrau, then another, and then another.

They appeared little by little as though rising with the dawning day. We stood there, bewildered at finding ourselves thus surrounded by these giants in this desolate country of eternal snow. Suddenly, opposite us, another endless chain unfolded itself, the Piedmont. Other peaks appeared to the north. This was indeed the immense land of great mountains, with icy brows, from the Rhindenhorn, as massive as its name, to the faint outline of the patriarch of the Alps, the Mont Blanc. Some were straight and proud, others were bent and looked deformed, but all were equally white, as though some god had thrown over the hunchbacked earth a cloth of immaculate whiteness.

Some looked near enough to touch; others were so far away that they could barely be distinguished.

The sky grew red, and all the peaks blushed. They looked as though the clouds had bled upon them. It was superb, awe-inspiring. Soon the flaming color paled and the whole army of peaks gradually grew pink, of a soft and tender pink, like the gowns of a young girl.

The sun appeared above the quilt of snow. Then, suddenly, the whole land of glaciers turned white, of a dazzling white, as though the horizon were full of silver domes.

The women looked on, enraptured. They started as the cork popped from a champagne bottle. Prince de Vanoris offered a glass to Bertha and cried:

"I drink to the health of the Marquise de Roseveyre!"

She stood up on her mule and answered:

"I drink to all my friends!"

Three hours later we took the train for Geneva, in the valley of the Rhône.

As soon as were alone, Bertha, who had been so happy and gay a little while ago, burst out sobbing, her face hidden in her hands. I fell to my knees, asking:

"What is the matter? What is the matter? Tell me, dearie, what is the matter?"

She stammered through her tears:

"It . . . it . . . it's all over, this being respectable!"

At that instant I certainly was on the point of committing a great blunder! . . . I did not.

As soon as we reached Paris I left Bertha. Later on I would not have had the strength of will.

(The diary of the Marquis de Roseveyre shows nothing of interest during the following two years. On July 20, 1883, we find the following lines.)

July 20, 1883.—Florence. Sad memories were brought back to me to-day. I was walking in the Cassines when a lady stopped her carriage and called me. It was Princess Vanoris. As soon as I came within speaking distance, she called:

"Oh, Marquis, my dear Marquis, how glad I am to see you! Quick, quick, give me news of the Marquise; she is undoubtedly the most charming woman that I have ever met in all my life!"

I stood there, surprised, not knowing what to say, and with a sad feeling in my heart. I stammered:

"Don't speak of her to me, Princess; I lost her three years ago."

She took my hand, saying:

"Oh! I sympathize with you, my poor friend."

She left me. I walked home, sad and discontented, thinking of Bertha as though we had just parted.

Fate often makes mistakes.

How many respectable women were born to be otherwise, and prove it.

Poor Bertha! How many of the others were born to be respectable. . . . And those . . . more than the others . . . perhaps . . . But . . . I must forget her.

IN BRITTANY

July, 1882.

THIS is the season for traveling, the clear season, when one loves new horizons, the vast stretches of blue sea which rest the eye and calm the soul, the fresh, wooded dells, where, for no reason, the heart grows tender. One sits, at sunset, on a bank of velvety grass and watches at one's feet a little pool of quiet water in the rut made by the wheels of passing wagons and where the sinking sun is reflected.

I delight in these walks through a land which one seems to be discovering, the sudden surprise on seeing customs of which one knew nothing, this constant tension of interest, this joy of seeing, this endless awakening of thought.

One thing alone spoils for me these charming explorations: guidebooks. Written by traveling salesmen, they give false descriptions, incorrect information; they indicate imaginary roads, and they are,

with the single exception of an excellent German guide, the comfort of shopkeepers on a pleasure trip to the land of Joan, and the despair of true trampers who go through the land knapsack on back and cane in hand by paths, through ravines and along the beaches.

They lie, they know nothing, they understand nothing with their stupid and emphatic prose. They make the most delightful countries seem ugly; they only know the highways and are worth no more than the so-called military maps, where the dams of the Seine, which were made thirty years ago, have not yet been recorded.

And yet how pleasant it is, when traveling, to know a little in advance the region into which one is venturing! How happy one is when one finds a book in which some sincere wanderer has outlined a few of his impressions! Sometimes it merely gives one a vague idea of the places to be seen; sometimes it gives more. When penetrating into Algeria as far as the oasis of Laghouat one should read every day and hour that admirable book by Fromentin, *A Summer in the Sahara.* This book opens the eyes and mind, it seems to light up these burning plains, mountains and solitudes, it reveals to one the very soul of the desert.

There are everywhere in France delightful spots which are almost unknown. Without intending to write a new guidebook, I would like, nevertheless, to point out a few short excursions, trips of a week or ten days, familiar to all pedestrians, but unknown to all who lead a sedentary life.

Never follow the highways, and always go along the bypaths, sleep in lofts when one does not come to an inn, eat bread and drink water when no other

provisions are at hand, fear neither rain nor distances nor the long hours of regular marches. This is the only way to penetrate into the heart of a country, to discover, right near the towns where all the tourists pass, thousands of things of which one had not the slightest idea.

Brittany is the most curious of all the old provinces of France; one can, in ten days, understand enough of it to grasp its temperament, for every country, like every man, has its peculiarities.

Let us cross it in a few lines. We will follow along the coast from Vannes to Douarmenez, the true Breton coast, solitary and low, strewn with reefs, where the waters always rumble and seem to answer the wind whistling over the moors.

The Morbihan, a kind of inland sea, which rises and descends under the pressure of the tides of the great ocean, stretches before the harbor of Vannes. One must cross it in order to reach the open.

It is full of mysterious, haunted Druidic islands. They are covered with tumuli, dolmens, menhirs, all these strange stones which, in the olden times, were almost looked upon as gods. These little islands, according to the Bretons, are as numerous as the days of the year. The Morbihan is a symbolical sea shaken by superstitions.

Herein lies the great charm of this country; it is a nursery for legends. Dead everywhere else, the old beliefs remain rooted in this granite soil. Old stories are also indestructible in this land; and the peasant will tell you of adventures accomplished fifteen centuries ago, as though they dated from yesterday, as though his father or grandfather had seen them.

There are crypts where the dead stay intact, as

on the day death struck them, dried simply because the source of the blood had dried up. Thus memories live eternally in this corner of France, and even the manner of thinking of remote ancestors still lives on.

I had left Vannes on the very day of my arrival, in order to visit an historical castle, Sucinio, and from there I expected to go to Locmariaker, Carnac, and then, following along the coast, to Pont-l'Abbé, Penmarch, Pointe du Raz, Douarnenez.

At first the road bordered along the Morbihan, and then cut across an endless heath crossed by a network of ditches full of water and without a house, a tree, a single creature, covered with underbrush, which whistled in the furious wind under the sky full of ragged clouds.

A little farther on I crossed a hamlet, where were wandering around three barefooted, sordid-looking peasants and a tall girl of about twenty, whose legs were covered with dung. Then I came out again on the barren, deserted, swampy heath, which stretched out to the sea, whose gray line, at times lightened by a streak of foam, extended to the horizon.

In the middle of this wild stretch rose a high ruin, a square castle, surrounded by towers, standing there all alone between these two deserts: the heath and the sea.

This old manor of Cucinil, which dates back to the thirteenth century, is far-famed. It is there that was born the great Connétable de Richemont, who reconquered France from the English.

There are no more doors. I entered the vast, solitary courtyard, where the crumbling turrets had made heaps of stones; I climbed up the remnants of stairways, scrambled up broken walls, clinging to vines, loose rocks, anything on which I could lay my hands, and I finally managed to reach the top of one of the towers whence I could look out over Brittany.

Opposite me, behind an uncultivated field, the dirty-looking ocean was thundering under a black sky; everywhere was the heath! Over there, to the right, lay the Morbihan with its ragged coasts, and farther away, barely visible, a white spot, lighted by the sun, indicated the position of Vannes. Still farther away could be seen a large cape: Quiberon!

All this was sad, melancholy, dreary. The wind was whistling over these mournful stretches; I was indeed in the old haunted country; and in the walls, bushes, ditches, I imagined that I could detect the very smell of legends.

The following day I crossed Saint-Gildas, where the ghost of Abelard roams. At Port-Navalo the sailor who ferried me across the straits spoke to me of his father, who was a Chouan, as well as his elder brother and his uncle, the curé; all three of them were killed. . . . And with outstretched hand he pointed to Quimberon.

At Locmariaker I entered the country of the Druids. A Breton showed me Cæsar's table, a monster granite slab upheld by giants; then he spoke to me of Cæsar as of a person whom he might have known.

Finally, still following the coast between the heath and the ocean, from the top of the hill, I saw before me, toward evening, the granite fields of Carnac.

They seem alive, these stones standing in endless rows, giants or pigmies, square, long, flat; they look like long, thin bodies or short, stout ones. When one looks at them steadily they seem to move, to bend, to become infused with life!

One easily gets lost along them. At times a wall interrupts this mass of granite; one climbs over it, and the strange procession begins over again, planted like avenues, spaced like soldiers, as terrifying as apparitions. Your heart beats, and unconsciously your mind goes back to the ages and is lost in superstitious beliefs.

As I was standing motionless, bewildered, and delighted, a sudden noise behind me gave me such a shock that I turned around with a start. A little old man, dressed in black, with a book under his arm, greeted me and said: "So you are visiting our Carnac, Monsieur." I told him of my enthusiasm and of the scare which he had given me. He continued: "Here, Monsieur, there are so many legends in the air that every one is afraid without knowing why. For five years I have been searching among these rocks; almost all of them have a secret, and at times I imagine that they have a soul. When I return to the boulevard I smile at my foolishness; but when I come back to Carnac I am a believer, an

unconscious believer, without any definite religion, but possessing them all." He stamped on the ground, crying: "This is a land of religion; one must never jest with bygone beliefs. We are, Monsieur, among the Druids; let us respect their faith!"

The sun sank behind the sea, leaving the sky crimson, and this light was shed on the great rocks, our neighbors. The old man smiled and said:

"These terrible creeds have such power in this place that I even had a vision here! What am I saying, a vision? A veritable apparition! Over there, on that dolmen, at this same hour one evening, I distinctly saw Korivwen, the sorceress who boiled the miraculous water."

I interrupted him and asked him who this witch Korivwen might be. He was indignant.

"What! You do not know the mother of the god Hu and the mother of the korrigans!"

"No, I must admit that I do not. If it is a legend, tell it to me."

I sat down beside him on a menhir, while he related the following tale:

"The god Hu, father of the Druids, had for wife the sorceress Korivwen. She presented him with three children, Mor-Vrau, Creiz-Viou, a daughter, the most beautiful girl in the world, and Aravik-Du, the most frightful-looking of all creatures.

"Korivwen, in her maternal love, wished at least to leave something to this unfortunate son, and she decided to let him drink the water of divination.

"This water had to boil a year. The enchantress confided the keeping of the vessel which contained it to a blind man named Morda and to the dwarf Gwiou.

"The year was almost over, and the two watch-

ers relaxed a little in their zeal, a small amount of the sacred liquid spilled, and three drops fell on the dwarf's finger; he carried it to his mouth, and immediately knew the future. The vessel then cracked of its own accord, and Korivwen appeared and rushed for Gwiou, who ran away.

"When he saw that he was in danger of being caught he changed himself into a hare, that he might run faster, but immediately the sorceress became a greyhound and sprang after him. She was going to seize him at the edge of a stream, but he suddenly took the form of a fish and jumped into the water. Then an enormous otter appeared, who pursued him so closely that he could only escape by becoming a bird. No sooner had he done this than an immense hawk, with outstretched wings and open beak, descended from the heavens; it was still Korivwen; and Gwiou, trembling with fear, changed himself into a grain of wheat and hid himself among many others.

"Then a big black hen ran up and swallowed him. Korivwen, revenged, was resting, when she noticed that she was once more to become a mother.

"The grain of wheat had sprouted in her. A child was born, and Hu abandoned it on the water in a wicker cradle. But the child was saved by the son of King Gouydno and became a genius, the spirit of the heath, the goblin. Thus it is that from Korivwen descend all these little fantastic beings, dwarfs and gnomes, who haunt these rocks. It is said that they live beneath them, in little holes, and that they come out in the evening to run around through the furze. Stand here for a long time, Monsieur, in the midst of these enchanted monuments; look steadily at some dolmen lying on the ground, and you will

soon hear the earth rumble; you will see the stone move, and you will tremble with fear as you see the head of a korrigan, which is looking at you and lifting the block of granite with his head. Now, let us go to dinner."

Night had come, moonless and black, full of the whisperings of the wind. I was walking with hands stretched out, bumping against these great upright stones; and the story, the country, my thoughts, all had taken such a supernatural tone, that I would not have been in the least surprised suddenly to feel a korrigan slip between my legs.

The following day I started out again, crossing heaths, villages, towns, Lorient, Quimperlé, so pretty in its valley, Quimper.

The road leaves Quimper, goes up a hill, crosses valleys, passes a sort of grassy and mournful-looking lake, and finally penetrates into Pont-l'Abbé, the most Breton little town of all that Breton Brittany which extends from the Morbihan to the Pointe du Raz.

At the entrance, an old castle surrounded by towers dips its walls in a gloomy pond, where the wild birds fly. A little river flows out of here, up which the coasters can come as far as the town. In the narrow streets with the severe-looking houses the men wear the immense broad-brimmed hat, the magnificent embroidered vest, and the four superposed jackets; the first, as large as the hand, barely covering the shoulder blades, and the last stopping halfway between the waist and the knees.

The tall, pretty, fresh girls have their bosoms compressed in a cloth vest, which does not even allow one to perceive their throats. Their hair is dressed in a peculiar manner. Two bands, em-

broidered in different colors, frame the face and hold back the hair, which falls in braids, and is then caught up over the head under a peculiar cap, often woven in gold and silver.

The road again leaves this little mediæval town. It leads toward the furze-dotted heath. From time to time I saw three or four cows grazing by the road, always accompanied by a sheep. For several days I wondered why I never saw cows without a sheep. This question troubled and worried me, became a regular obsession. Finally I looked for a man I could ask. I searched for a long time, roaming around through villages and never meeting a person who could speak French. Finally a priest who was walking along, reading his breviary, informed me politely that this sheep is the wolf's share.

A sheep is worth less than a cow, and as there is no danger in capturing it, the wolf always prefers it. But it often happens that the brave cows form a hollow square, in order to defend their innocent companion, and they receive on the end of their sharp horns the beast in quest of live flesh.

Here is to be found the legendary wolf, which terrifies our childhood, the great white wolf, which all the hunters have seen and which no one has ever killed. He is never seen in the morning. It is toward five o'clock on a winter's evening, just as the sun is setting, that he appears running along on some barren height, outlining his long silhouette against the sky.

Why has no one killed him? Ah, well! This is just a supposition; during the hunt, luncheon begins at about one o'clock and ends at about four. A lot of wine has been consumed, and much has been said about the white wolf. On leaving the table he

is seen.' What is there surprising about his not being killed?

I was going straight before me on the road paved with gray granite, which shone in the sunlight. The fields on both sides are dotted with furze. Here and there an enormous stone constantly reminds of the Druids. The wind blows close to the ground, whistling through the thorny bushes. At times a dull roar, like the boom of a distant cannon, makes the earth tremble; for I am approaching Penmarch, where it seems that the sea plunges into sonorous caverns. The waves engulfed in these holes shake the entire coast, and can be heard as far as Quimper on a stormy day.

For a long time, already, I have been able to see the long line of gray breakers, which seemed to dominate this whole low, barren country. Everywhere pointed rocks burst through the waves and show their black heads surrounded by foam, as though they were drooling; right up close to the water a few frail houses are seeking to hide behind a heap of stones in order to avoid the eternal storm and salt rain of the ocean. A large lighthouse, which trembles on its rocky foundation, juts out into the open, and the keepers relate that sometimes during the stormy nights the long granite column pitches like a ship, and that the clock falls downward to the ground and that the objects on the wall are loosened, fall and break.

From here to the Conquet is the country of shipwrecks. It is there that is ambushed the hideous death of the sea—drowning. No other coast is more dangerous, more feared, such a destroyer of men.

At the backs of the little houses of the fishermen one sees, groveling in the mud with the pigs, an old

woman, big girls with bare and dirty legs, and the sons, the oldest of whom is about thirty. The father is almost never to be found there, and very seldom the oldest son. Do not ask where they are, for the old woman would stretch out her arm toward the horizon, where the waves roll and pass as though ready, at any minute, to rush over this land.

But it is not only the treacherous sea that destroys these men. There is an all-powerful and still more perfidious ally which helps it every night in its greed for human flesh—alcohol. The sailors know and admit it. They say: " When the bottle is full you see the reef, but when it is empty you see it no more."

The coast of Penmarch terrifies one. It is here that the wreckers must have attracted ships in danger by tying a lantern to the horns of a cow, which has been hobbled in order to simulate the motions of another vessel.

Here, a little to the right, is a rock which has become famous by a terrible tragedy. The wife of one of the last prefects of the Morbihan was sitting on this stone, holding her little girl in her lap. A few yards below her, the sea seemed calm, inoffensive, asleep. Suddenly one of these strange waves which are known as " tidal waves " came up noiselessly, swollen, irresistible. It climbed the rock like a sneak and carried out two women. Passing coast guards, in the distance, saw only a pink parasol quietly floating on the calm waters, and the great, bare, glistening rock.

For a whole year, lawyers and physicians discussed, argued, pleaded in order to find out which one of the two women, who had been carried away in the same wave, had died the first, mother or

daughter. Cats were drowned with their kittens, dogs with their pups, rabbits with their little ones, in order that there might be no doubt, for a large inheritance was at stake, as the fortune was to go to one or the other of two families, according as the last convulsion was stronger in the large or in the small body.

Almost opposite this sinister spot rises a granite Calvary, such as one often meets in this pious land, where the crosses, so old themselves, are as numerous as their elders, the dolmens. But this Calvary rises over a strange bas-relief, representing in a crude and even vulgar manner the birth of Christ. A passing Englishman admired the naïve sculpture and had it covered over with a roof in order to preserve it from the attacks of this wild climate.

Let us follow along the shore the endless beach along the bay of Audierne. We must either ford or swim across two little rivers, plod along through the sand and seaweed, and keep on between these two solitudes, one moving and the other motionless, the sea and the heath.

Here is Audierne, a gloomy little harbor, which is only enlivened by a few fishing smacks, anchored at the entrance, engaged in sardine fishing.

Before leaving, in the morning, instead of the common coffee, I had a few of these fresh fish, covered with salt, tasty and savory, real violets of the seas. Then I started out toward the Pointe du Raz, this end of the world, this last bit of Europe.

I went up, up, always up, and suddenly I saw two seas, to the left the ocean, to the right the English Channel.

It is here that the current and furious waves meet in battle, wrecking vessels and engulfing men.

O waves, how many sad stories you know,
Deep, dark, and feared by those waiting at home.

No more trees, nothing but tufts of grass on the great outjutting cape. At the end of it are two lighthouses, and all around are many others, rising up above the reefs. There is one which they have been trying in vain to finish for the last ten years. The furious sea keeps destroying the work of the tireless workers.

Far away in the distance, the sacred island of Sein looks along the horizon, over the harbor of Brest, at its dangerous sister, the island of Ouessant.

"Who sees Ouessant
Sees his blood,"

say the sailors. The island of Ouessant is the most inaccessible of all, and one which the sailors only approach with dread.

The high promontory ends abruptly, falling straight down into the raging seas. But a little path surrounds it, creeping along the inclined granite, spreading out on the crests not wider than the hand.

Suddenly one finds himself standing on the brink of a fearful abyss with walls as black as ink, which bring back to one the noise of the furious struggle of the waters, which is happening below, deep down at the bottom of this hole, which has been called Hell.

Although standing a hundred yards above the sea, I could feel the spray, and, leaning over the precipice, I contemplated these raging waters, which seemed to be moved by an uncontrollable rage.

It was indeed a hell which no poet had described. I was seized with dread at the thought of men be-

ing thrown down in there, rolling, turning, and plunging about in this storm between four walls, thrown up against the sides, caught again by the waves, engulfed, reappearing, and finally swallowed up by the bubbling, giant waves.

I started out again, haunted by these images, and pushing my way against a heavy wind which was lashing a solitary cape. At the end of about twenty minutes I reached a little village. An old priest, who was reading his breviary behind a stone wall, greeted me. I asked him where I might spend the night, and he offered me the hospitality of his home.

An hour later, we were sitting before his door, talking of this dreary country, which grips the soul, when a little Breton, a child, passed before us, barefooted, his long blond hair flying in the wind. The *curé* called him in his maternal language, and the little urchin, suddenly very shy, came toward us, with his eyes lowered and his hands hanging by his sides.

"He will recite his canticle to you," said the priest; "the little fellow has a wonderful memory, and I expect to make something out of him."

The child began to mumble unknown words in the sing-song tone used by little girls who are saying their piece. He rattled on without any punctuation, running all the syllables together as though the whole were only one word, stopping from time to time for a breath, and then taking up again his hurried recital. Then he was silent. It was all over. The *curé* patted him on the cheek, and said:

"Very well! Now, run along."

The child went his way; then my host added:

"He has just recited to you an old canticle of this land."

I asked:

"An old canticle? Is it known?"

"Not at all. I'll translate it for you if you wish."

Then the old man, in a powerful voice, growing excited as though he were preaching, raising his arm in a threatening manner, recited this Breton canticle, which I took down at his dictation.

"Hell! Hell! O, sinners, do you know what it is?

* * *

"It is a furnace with a raging fire, beside which the fire of a forge, which reddens the bricks of an oven, is nothing but smoke!

* * *

"Light is never seen there! Fire burns like fever, invisible! Hope never enters there, for the wrath of God has sealed the door!

* * *

"Fire on your heads, fire all about you! Are you hungry? Eat fire! Are you thirsty? Drink from this river of molten brimstone!

* * *

"You will cry through Eternity; your tears will make a sea, and this sea will not be a drop of water for Hell! Your tears shall nourish the flames instead of putting them out; and you will feel the marrow burning in your bones.

* * *

"And then your heads will be cut off above your shoulders, and yet you will live! The demons will toss your pieces to each other, and yet you will live! They will roast your flesh on braziers; you will feel your flesh turn to coals; and yet you will live!

"And there, there will still be other torches. You will hear reproaches, maledictions, and curses.

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"The father will say to his son: 'Curses be upon you, son of my flesh, for it is for your sake that I wished to amass money by theft!'

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* *

"And the son will answer: 'Curses! Curses be upon you, my father; for it is you who gave me my pride, which led me here!'

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* *

"And the daughter will say to her mother: 'A thousand curses on you, my mother, a thousand curses on you, den of impurities, for you left me free, and I turned away from God!'

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* *

"And the mother will no longer recognize her children; and she will answer: 'Curses on my daughters and on my sons, curses on the sons of my daughters and on the daughters of my sons!'

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* *

"And these cries will resound throughout Eternity. And these tortures will always be. And this fire . . . this fire! . . . it is the wrath of God who lighted this fire! . . . it will burn forever without diminishing, without smoke, never penetrating less deeply than the marrow of your bones.

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* *

"Eternity! . . . Woe! . . . Never to cease dying, never to cease drowning in an ocean of suffering.

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* *

"O *'Never'!* you are a word faster than the ocean! O *'Never'!* you are full of cries, of tears, and of anger! *'Never'!* Oh, you are harsh. Oh! you terrify me!"

When the old priest had finished he asked me:

"Is that not terrible?"

Over there, in the distance, we could hear the tireless wave beating against the gloomy cliff. I once more saw this hole full of angry foam, dismal and roaring, the true home of Death; and something of the mystic fear which makes repenting sinners tremble was weighing on my soul.

I started out again at sunrise, expecting to reach Douarnenez before nightfall.

A man, who spoke French and who had traveled for fourteen years in the service of government ships, came up to me as I was looking for the coast-guard path, and we went down together toward the Baie des Trépasses, of which the Pointe du Raz is a part.

It is an immense semicircle of sand, of an unforgettable melancholy, of a disquieting sadness, giving one, after a short time, the desire to pass by. A barren valley with a mournful pond, without any reeds, a pond which seems dead, reaches down to this frightful beach. It seems, indeed, to be an antechamber to the infernal regions. The yellow sand, dreary and flat, stretches out as far as the enormous granite rock which faces the Pointe du Raz, and where break the furious waves.

In the distance we saw three men standing motionless in the sand, like stakes. My companion seemed surprised, for no one ever came to this deserted spot. But on coming near, we noticed something long, stretched out near them, as though buried in the sand; at times they would lean down and touch it and then stand up again.

It was the corpse of a drowned sailor from Douarnenez, lost the preceding week, with his four

comrades. For a week they had been waiting in this place, where the current throws up the bodies. He was the first to come to this last meeting-place.

But something was occupying my guide's mind, for drowned people are not rare in this country. He took me toward the gloomy pond, and, making me lean over the water, he showed me the walls of the town of Ys. All that was visible was a bit of ancient masonry. Then I took a drink from a tiny stream of water at the best spring in the country, as he claimed. Finally he told me the story of the vanished city, as though the event were still recent and had happened, at the earliest, at the time of his grandfather.

A good but weak-minded king had a daughter, who was very perverse and beautiful, so beautiful that all the men went mad at the sight of her, so perverse that she gave herself to all, then had them killed by throwing them into the sea from the top of the neighboring rocks.

It is said that her unruly passions were more violent than the furious waves of the ocean and more unappeasable. Her body seemed to be a furnace where the souls burned which Satan then plucked.

God wearied of this lust and informed an old saint, who was living in the neighborhood, of his plans. The saint warned the king, who did not dare to punish and imprison his darling daughter, but who informed her of God's warning. She paid no heed to it and gave herself up to such debauchery that the whole town imitated her, and became a city of love, from which all modesty and virtue disappeared.

One night God awoke the saint and announced to

him that the hour of vengeance had come. The saint ran to the king, who alone had remained virtuous in this country. The king had his horse saddled, and offered one to the saint, who accepted it. A great noise frightened them, and they saw the sea coming toward them, bounding and roaring across the country. Then the king's daughter appeared in her window, crying: "Father, are you going to let me die thus?" And the king took her across his horse and fled through one of the gates of the town just as the water was entering through the other.

They galloped through the night, but the waves followed them with a terrible rumbling and grumbling. Already their foam was lapping the horses' hoofs, and the old saint said to the king: "Sire, cast your daughter from your horse, or else you are lost." And his daughter cried: "Father, father, do not desert me!" But the saint stood up in his stirrups, and, in a voice like thunder, he announced: "It is the will of God!" Then the king thrust away from him his daughter, who was clinging to him. She fell in back of him; the waves immediately swallowed her and then receded.

And the dismal pond which covers these ruins is the water, which has remained there since the destruction of the impure city.

This legend is a story of Sodom, arranged for the use of ladies.

This event, which is related as though it had happened yesterday, occurred, it seems, in the fourth century after the coming of Christ.

I reached Douarnanez in the evening. This is a little fishing town, which would be the most famous bathing resort in France if it were less isolated.

The harbor is what makes its gracefulness and

charm. It lies in the hollow and seems to watch the gentle, long coast, undulating, rounding, always curving delightfully, and whose distant crests are bathed in this light, transparent, blue and white haze, which floats over the sea.

The following day I left for Quimper, and I spent the night at Brest, in order, at daybreak, to take the train to Paris.

THE CREUSOT IRON-WORKS

THE sky is blue, perfectly blue, full of sunlight. The train has just passed Montchanin. Over there, in front of us, rises a black, opaque cloud, which seems to come from the earth and obscure the azure clearness of the day, a heavy, motionless cloud. It is smoke from the Creusot iron works. As we come nearer we begin to distinguish objects. A hundred giant chimneys are belching forth clouds of smoke, other smaller ones pant and spit forth streams of steam. All this mingles, spreads, covers the town, fills the streets, hides the sky, extinguishes the sun. It is almost dark now. Coal dust is flying around, it stings the eyes, spots the skin, and spoils the clothes. The houses are as black as though they had been rubbed with soot, the sidewalk is black, the windows are powdered with coal-dust. An odor of chimneys, of tar, of coal is everywhere, contracts the throat,

oppresses the lungs; sometimes an acrid taste of iron, of the forge, of burning metal, of an inferno of fire stops the breath and makes one look up in search of the pure, free, healthy air of the open sky; but up there one sees a thick and heavy cloud, and near by thousands of little specks of coal drifting about.

These are the Creusot iron-works.

A muffled and continuous sound shakes the earth, a sound made up of a thousand different noises, which is sometimes interrupted by a terrific shock which shakes the entire city.

Let us enter the factory of Messrs. Schneider.

What a fairy-land! This is the kingdom of Iron, where reigns his majesty Fire!

One sees fire everywhere. Immense buildings stretch out as far as the eye can see, as high as mountains, and filled to the top with machines which turn, fall, rise, cross, tremble, roar, whistle, grind, creak. All these work by fire.

Here are braziers, over there are leaping flames, farther away blocks of red-hot iron are going in and coming out of the furnaces, passing through the gearing wheels, changing shapes, always red-hot. This ravenous machinery eats up the fire for this glowing iron, which it crushes, cuts, saws, flattens, spins, twists, making out of it locomotives, vessels, cannons, thousands of different things, as fine as the chiseled work of artists, as ponderous as the works of giants, complicated, delicate, brutal, powerful.

Let us try to see and to understand.

To the right we enter into a vast gallery, where four tremendous machines are operating. They work slowly, moving their wheels, their pistons, their rods. What are they doing? They are simply

blowing up air to the tall furnaces where boils the fusing metal. These are the gigantic lungs of the monstrous crucibles. They breath, nothing more; and you pant as though in a sweating-room.

Here are the crucibles; there are two of them, at either extremity of another gallery, as large as towers, roaring and spitting such flames that, a hundred yards away, the eyes are blinded, the skin parched, and you pant as though in a sweating room.

One might think one's self in a raging volcano. The fire which comes from the mouths is white, unbearable to the sight, and it is projected with such force and noise that nothing can describe it.

In there the steel is boiling, the Bessemer steel of which rails are made. A strong man, good-looking, young, serious, his head covered with a large black felt hat, is attentively watching this roaring fire. He is sitting before a wheel like that of a ship, and at times he turns it like a pilot. Immediately the anger of the crucible grows, it spits out a hurricane of flames; it is the chief foundryman who has just increased the enormous current of air which goes through it.

And, still like a ship's captain, the man constantly carries to his eyes what looks like a marine glass, in order to observe the color of the fire. He makes a motion; a little wagon moves forward and dumps other metals into the roaring brazier. The melter again observes the shade of the furious flames, looking for signs, and, suddenly, he turns another very small wheel, which shakes the enormous vat. It slowly turns over, sputtering out a terrific jet of sparks, which reach to the ceiling; and, as delicately as an elephant trying to curtsy, it pours out a few drops of a flaming liquid into a

mould which is held out to it, then, roaring, it straightens out.

A man carries this fire away. It is now a red ingot, which is placed under a steam hammer. The hammer strikes, crushes, and flattens the hot metal into thin sheets, which are immediately cooled in water. It is then seized with a pair of tongs and broken; the foreman examines the grain before giving out the order: "Cast!"

Then the crucible once more turns over, and, like a valet filling glasses around a table, it pours the molten stream of steel which is carrying into a series of moulds placed around it.

It seems to move simply, of its own accord, as though impelled by a soul. For all that it is necessary to do to move these fantastic engines, to make them accomplish their work, to make them come, go, fall, rise, turn, is simply to touch a lever as large as a cane, or to press a button like that of an electric bell.

We go out with our faces burning and our eyes watering.

Here are two brick towers, in the open air, too high to be held under a roof. An unbearable heat escapes from them. A man armed with a crowbar strikes at the bottom, knocks off a kind of blaze, digs down farther. Soon a light appears, a bright spot. Two more blows and a stream, a torrent of fire, rushes through the channels dug into the earth. This is the cast iron. One feels choked before this frightful stream; one runs away and enters the high buildings where locomotives and the great machines for battleships are made.

One can distinguish nothing; all is confusion. It is a regular labyrinth of handles, wheels, belts, mov-

ing gears. At each step one finds one's self before some monster working on red-hot or on cold iron. Here there are saws which are dividing slabs as large as the body; over there we see points penetrating blocks of cast iron and going through them with as much ease as a needle pierces a piece of cloth; farther on, another instrument is cutting sheets of steel, just as scissors would cut a sheet of paper. All this works together with different motions, a fantastic people of wicked, grumbling beasts. There is always fire under the hammers, fire under the furnaces, fire everywhere. And, above all, dominating the noise of the wheels, of the boilers, of the anvils, of all kinds of machinery, a formidable shock makes the earth tremble. It is the great Creusot stamp at work.

It stands at the end of an immense building, which contains ten or twelve others. All fall regularly on an incandescent block, which throws out a rain of sparks, and little by little flattens out and takes any shape which the men wish.

The big one, which weighs over two hundred thousand pounds, falls as might a mountain on a piece of red-hot steel even larger than itself. At each stroke a hail of fire scatters on all sides, and one sees the mass of metal on which the monster is working gradually thinning out.

It rises and falls with a graceful ease, moved by a man who gently touches a frail lever; and it makes one think of the fairy-tales which tell of the frightful animals conquered by children.

We now enter the gallery where are the rolling mills. This is an even stranger sight. Red serpents run along the ground, some as thin as strings, others as large as cables. They look like enormous earth

worms and terrible boa-constrictors. For it is here that wires and rails are made.

Men with their eyes covered by metallic shades, their hands, arms, and legs wrapped in leather, throw into the open jaws of the machines the eternal glowing iron. The machine seizes it, stretches it, lengthens it, draws it out, repeats this operation, always making it thinner. The iron twists like a wounded reptile, seems to resist, but gives in and stretches out indefinitely.

Here are the rails. Powerless to resist, this red, opaque and square mass of Bessemer stretches out under the effort of the machine, and in a few seconds becomes a rail. A giant saw cuts it at the exact length, others follow it without stopping, and thus the gigantic work continues.

At last we leave, as black as the stokers themselves, worn out, blinded. Over our head stretches the heavy cloud of coal and smoke, which is rising to the heavens.

Oh! for a few flowers, a field, a brook and some grass, where one could sleep without thinking and without any other noise about one than the trickling of the water and the distant crowing of the cock!

THE CONFESSION

MARGUERITE DE THERELLES was dying. Although she was only fifty-six years old she looked at least seventy-five. She gasped for breath, her face whiter than the sheets, and had spasms of violent shivering, with her face convulsed and her eyes haggard as though she saw some frightful vision.

Her elder sister, Suzanne, six years older than herself, was sobbing on her knees beside the bed. A small table close to the dying woman's couch bore, on a white cloth, two lighted candles; for the priest was expected at any moment to administer extreme unction and the last communion.

The apartment wore that melancholy aspect common to death-chambers; a look of despairing farewell. Medicine bottles littered the furniture; linen lay in the corners into which it had been kicked or swept. The very chairs looked, in their disarray, as if they were terrified and had run in all directions. Death—terrible Death—was in the room, hidden, awaiting his prey.

The history of the two sisters was an affecting one. It was spoken of far and wide; it had drawn tears from many eyes.

Suzanne, the elder, had once been passionately loved by a young man, whose affection she returned. They were engaged to be married, and the wedding day was at hand, when Henri de Sampierre suddenly died.

The young girl's despair was terrible, and she took an oath never to marry. She faithfully kept her vow, and adopted widow's weeds for the remainder of her life.

But one morning her sister, her little sister Marguerite, then only twelve years old, threw herself into Suzanne's arms, sobbing: "Sister, I don't want you to be unhappy. I don't want you to mourn all your life. I'll never leave you—never, never, never! I shall never marry, either. I'll stay with you always—always!"

Suzanne kissed her, touched by the child's devotion, though not putting any faith in her promises.

But the little one kept her word, and, despite her parents' remonstrances, despite her elder sister's prayers, never married. She was remarkably pretty, and refused many offers. She never left her sister.

They spent their whole life together, without a single day's separation. They went everywhere together, and were inseparable. But Marguerite was pensive, melancholy, sadder than her sister, as if her sublime sacrifice had perhaps undermined her spirits. She grew older more quickly; her hair was white at thirty; and she was often ill, apparently stricken with some unknown, wasting malady.

And now she would be the first to die.

She had not spoken for twenty-four hours, except to whisper at daybreak:

"Send at once for the priest."

And she had since remained lying on her back, convulsed with agony, her lips moving as if unable to utter the dreadful words that rose in her heart, her face expressive of a terror distressing to witness.

Suzanne, distracted with grief, her brow pressed against the bed, wept bitterly, repeating over and over again the words:

"Margot, my poor Margot, my little one!"

She had always called her "my little one"; while Marguerite's name for the elder was invariably "sister."

A footstep sounded on the stairs. The door opened. An acolyte appeared, followed by the aged priest in his surplice. As soon as she saw him the dying woman sat up suddenly in bed, opened her lips, stammered a few words, and began to scratch the bedclothes, as if she would have made a hole in them.

Father Simon approached, took her hand, kissed her on the forehead, and said in a gentle voice:

"May God pardon your sins, my daughter; be of good courage, now is the moment to confess them —speak!"

Then Marguerite, shuddering from head to foot, so that the very bed shook with her nervous movements, gasped:

"Sit down, sister, and listen."

The priest stooped towards the prostrate Suzanne, raised her to her feet, placed her in a chair, and, taking a hand of each of the sisters, pronounced:

"Lord God! Send them strength! Shed Thy mercy upon them."

And Marguerite began to speak. The words issued from her lips one by one—hoarse, jerky, tremulous.

"Pardon, pardon, sister! pardon me! Oh, if only you knew how I have dreaded this moment all my life!"

Suzanne faltered through her tears:

"But what have I to pardon, little one? You have given me everything, sacrificed all to me; you are an angel."

But Marguerite interrupted her:

"Be silent, be silent! Let me speak! Don't stop me! It is terrible—let me tell all, to the very end, without interruption. Listen. You remember—you remember—Henri——"

Suzanne trembled, and looked at her sister. The younger one went on:

"In order to understand you must hear everything. I was twelve years old—only twelve—you remember, don't you? And I was spoilt; I did just as I pleased. You remember how everybody spoilt me? Listen. The first time he came he had on his riding-boots; he dismounted before the door, and apologized for his costume, saying that he had a message for father. You remember, don't you? Don't speak. Listen. When I saw him I was struck with admiration. I thought him so handsome, and I stayed in a corner of the drawing-room all the time he was talking. Children are strange—and terrible —— Yes, indeed, I dreamed of him.

"He came again—many times— I looked at him with all my eyes, all my heart. I was large for my age, and much more precocious than anyone suspected. He came often. I thought only of him. I often whispered to myself:

" ' Henri—Henri de Sampierre! '

" Then I was told that he was going to marry you. That was a blow! Oh, sister, a terrible blow—terrible! I wept all through three sleepless nights. He came every afternoon, after lunch. You remember, don't you? Don't answer. Listen. You used to make cakes that he was very fond of—with flour, butter, and milk. Oh, I know how to make them. I could make them still, if necessary. He would swallow them at one mouthful, and wash them down with a glass of wine, saying: ' Delicious! ' Do you remember the way he said it?

" I was jealous—jealous! Your wedding-day was drawing near. It was only a fortnight distant. I was distracted. I said to myself: ' He shall not marry Suzanne—no, he shall not! He shall marry me when I am old enough! I shall never love anyone half so much.' But one evening, ten days before the wedding, you went for a stroll with him in the moonlight before the house—and yonder—under the pine-tree, the big pine-tree—he kissed you—kissed you—and held you in his arms for long—so long! You remember, don't you? It was probably the first time. You were so pale when you came back to the drawing-room!

" I saw you. I was there in the shrubbery. I was mad with rage! I would have killed you both if I could!

" I said to myself: ' He shall never marry Suzanne—never! He shall marry no one! I could not bear it! ' And all at once I began to hate him intensely.

" Then do you know what I did? Listen. I had seen the gardener prepare pellets for killing stray dogs. He would crush a bottle into small pieces with

a stone, and then he put the ground glass into a ball of meat.

"I stole a small medicine bottle from mother's room; I ground it fine with a hammer, and hid the glass in my pocket. It was a glistening powder. The next day, when you had made your little cakes, I opened them with a knife, and inserted the glass. He ate three. I ate one myself. I threw the six others into the pond. The two swans died three days later. You remember? Oh! don't speak! Listen, listen. I, I alone, did not die. But I have always been ill. Listen—he died—you know—listen—that was not the worst. It was afterward, later—always—the most terrible—listen——

"My life, all my life—such torture! I said to myself: 'I will never leave my sister. And on my deathbed I will tell her all.' And now I have told. And I have always thought of this moment—the moment when all would be told. Now it has come. It is terrible—oh!—sister!

"I have always thought, morning and evening, day and night: 'I shall have to tell her some day!' I waited. The horror of it! It is done. Say nothing. Now I am afraid—I am afraid! Oh! Supposing I should see him again, by-and-by, when I am dead! See him again! Only to think of it! I dare not—yet I must. I am going to die. I want you to forgive me. I insist on it. I cannot meet him without your forgiveness. Oh, tell her to forgive me, Father! Tell her! I implore you! I cannot die without it."

She was silent, and lay back, gasping for breath, still plucking at the sheets with her fingers.

Suzanne had hidden her face in her hands, and

did not move. She was thinking of him whom she had loved so long. What a life of happiness they might have had together! She saw him again, in the dim and distant past—that past for ever lost. Beloved dead! how the thought of them rends the heart! Oh! that kiss, his only kiss! She had retained the memory of it in her soul. And after that nothing, nothing more, throughout her whole existence!

The priest rose suddenly, and in a firm, compelling voice, said:

"Mademoiselle Suzanne, your sister is dying!"

Then Suzanne, raising her tear-stained face, put her arms round her sister, and kissing her fervently, exclaimed:

"I forgive you, I forgive you, little one!"

THE PIECE OF STRING

IT was market-day, and from all the country round Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the town. The men walked slowly, throwing the whole body forward at every step. Their long legs were twisted and deformed by the slow, trying labors of the country:—the work of bending over to plow, which makes their left shoulders too high and their figures crooked; and the labor of reaping corn, which obliges them for steadiness' sake to spread their knees too wide. Their starched blue blouses, shining as though varnished, ornamented at collar and cuffs with little patterns of white stitch-work, and blown up big around their bony bodies, looked very much like balloons about to soar, but putting forth a head, two arms, and two feet.

Some of these fellows dragged a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And just behind the animal, beating it over the back with a leaf-covered branch to hasten its pace, followed their wives, carrying large baskets out of which protruded the heads of chickens or the heads of ducks. These women walked more lively and quickly than the men; their figures, withered and

upright, were adorned with scanty little shawls pinned over their flat bosoms; and they enveloped their heads each in a white cloth, close fastened round the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Now a *char-à-banc* passed by, drawn by a jerky-paced nag. It shook up strangely the two men on the seat. And the woman at the bottom of the cart held fast to its sides to lessen the hard joltings.

In the market-place at Goderville was a great crowd, a mingled multitude of men and beasts. The horns of cattle, the high and long-napped hats of wealthy peasants, the head-dresses of the women, came to the surface of that sea. And voices clamorous, sharp, shrill, made a continuous and savage din. Above it a huge burst of laughter from the sturdy lungs of a merry peasant would sometimes sound, and sometimes a long bellow from a cow tied fast to the wall of a house.

It all smelled of the stable, of milk, of hay, and of perspiration, giving off that half-human, half-animal odor which is peculiar to the men of the fields.

Maître Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was taking his way toward the square, when he perceived on the ground a little piece of string. Maître Hauchecorne, economical, like all true Normans, reflected that everything was worth picking up which could be of any use; and he stooped down—but painfully, because he suffered from rheumatism. He took the bit of thin string from the ground, and was carefully preparing to roll it up when he saw Maître Malandain, the harness-maker, on his door-step, staring at him. They had once had a quarrel about a halter, and they had remained angry, bearing malice on both sides. Maître Hauchecorne was overcome with a sort of shame at

being seen by his enemy looking in the dirt so for a bit of string. He quickly hid it beneath his blouse in the pocket of his breeches; then pretended to be still looking for something on the ground which he did not discover; finally went off toward the market-place, with his head bent forward, and a body almost doubled in two by rheumatic pains.

He lost himself immediately in the crowd, which was clamorous, slow, and agitated by interminable bargains. The peasants examined the cows, went off, came back, always in great perplexity and fear of being cheated, never quite daring to decide, looking askance at the seller, trying ceaselessly to discover the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The woman, having placed their great baskets at their feet, had pulled out the poultry, which lay upon the ground, tied by the legs, with scared eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to propositions, maintaining their prices, with a dry manner, with an impassible face; or, suddenly, perhaps, deciding to take the lower price which was offered, they cried out to the customer, who was starting to go away:

"All right, I'll let you have them, Mâit' Anthime."

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the *Angelus* struck midday those who lived at a distance poured into the inns.

At Jourdain's the great room was filled with eaters, just as the vast court was filled with vehicles of every sort—wagons, gigs, *char-à-bancs,* tilburys, tilt-carts which have no name, yellow with mud, misshapen, pieced together, raising their shafts to heaven like two arms, or it may be with their nose in the dirt and their rear in the air.

Just opposite to where the diners were at table the huge fireplace, full of clear flame, threw a lively heat on the backs of those who sat along the right. Three spits were turning, loaded with chickens, with pigeons, and with joints of mutton; and a delectable odor of roast meat, and of gravy flowing over crisp brown skin, took wing from the hearth, kindled merriment, caused mouths to water.

All the aristocracy of the plow were eating there, at Maît' Jourdain's, the innkeeper's, a dealer in horses also, and a sharp fellow who had made a great deal of money in his day.

The dishes were passed round, were emptied, with jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, of his purchases and his sales. They asked news about the crops. The weather was good for green stuffs, but too wet for wheat.

Suddenly the drum rolled in the court before the house. Every one, except some of the most indifferent, was on his feet at once, and ran to the door, to the windows, with his mouth still full and his napkin in his hand.

When the public crier had finished his tattoo he called forth in a jerky voice, making his pauses out of time:

"Let it be known to the inhabitants of Goderville, and in general to all—persons present at the market, that there has been lost this morning, on the Beuzeville road, between—nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocket-book, containing five hundred francs and business papers. You are requested to return it—to the mayor's office, at once, or to Maître Fortuné Houlbrèque, of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward."

Then the man went away. They heard once more

at a distance the dull beatings on the drum and the faint voice of the crier. They began to talk of this event, reckoning up the chances which Maître Houlbrèque had of finding or of not finding his pocket-book again.

The meal went on. They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared on the threshold.

He asked:

"Is Maître Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, here?"

Maître Hauchecorne, seated at the other end of the table, answered:

"Here I am."

And the corporal resumed:

"Maître Hauchecorne, will you have the kindness to come with me to the mayor's office? Monsieur le Maire would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised and uneasy, gulped down his little glass of cognac, got up, and, even worse bent over than in the morning, since the first steps after a rest were always particularly difficult, started off, repeating:

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the corporal.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an armchair. He was the notary of the place, a tall, grave man of pompous speech.

"Maître Hauchecorne," said he, "this morning, on the Beuzeville road, you were seen to pick up the pocket-book lost by Maître Houlbrèque, of Manneville."

The countryman, speechless, regarded the mayor, frightened already by this suspicion which rested on him he knew not why.

"I, I picked up that pocket-book?"

"Yes, you."

"I swear I don't even know nothing about it at all."

"You were seen."

"They saw me, me? Who is that who saw me?"

"Monsieur Malandain, the harness-maker."

Then the old man remembered, understood, and, reddening with anger:

"Ah! he saw me, did he, the rascal? He saw me picking up this string here, M'sieu' le Maire."

And, fumbling at the bottom of his pocket, he pulled out of it the little end of string.

But the mayor incredulously shook his head:

"You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandain, a man worthy of credit, has mistaken this string for a pocket-book."

The peasant, furious, raised his hand and spit as if to attest his good faith, repeating:

"For all that, it is the truth of the good God, the blessed truth, M'sieu' le Maire. There! on my soul and my salvation I repeat it."

The mayor continued:

"After you picked up the thing in question, you even looked for some time in the mud to see if a piece of money had not dropped out of it."

The good man was suffocated with indignation and with fear:

"If they can say!—if they can say . . . . such lies as that to slander an honest man! If they can say!—"

He might protest, he was not believed.

He was confronted with M. Malandain, who repeated and sustained his testimony. They railed at one another for an hour. At his own request Maître Hauchecorne was searched. Nothing was found upon him.

At last, the mayor, much perplexed, sent him away, warning him that he would inform the public prosecutor, and ask for orders.

The news had spread. When he left the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded, interrogated with a curiosity which was serious or mocking as the case might be, but into which no indignation entered. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He passed on, button-holed by every one, himself button-holing his acquaintances, beginning over and over again his tale and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out to prove that he had nothing.

They said to him:

"You old rogue, go!"

And he grew angry, exasperated, feverish, in despair at not being believed, and always telling his story.

The night came. It was time to go home. He left with three of his neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the string; and all the way he talked of his adventure.

That evening he made the round in the village of Bréauté, for the purpose of telling every one. He met only unbelievers.

He brooded over it all night long.

The next day, about one in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a farm hand of Maître Breton, the market-gardener at Ymauville, returned the pocket-book and its entire contents to Maître Houlbrèque, of Manneville.

This man said, indeed, that he had found it on the road; but not knowing how to read, he had carried it home and given it to his master.

The news spread to the environs. Maître Hauchecorne was informed. He put himself at once upon the alert and began to relate his story as completed by the *dénouement*. He triumphed.

"What grieved me," said he, "was not the thing itself, do you understand; but it was the lies. There's nothing does you so much harm as being in disgrace for lying."

All day he talked of his adventure, he told it on the roads to the people who passed; at the cabaret to the people who drank; and the next Sunday, when they came out of church. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. He was easy, now, and yet something worried him without his knowing exactly what it was. People had a joking manner while they listened. They did not seem convinced. He seemed to feel their small talk behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week he went to market at Goderville, prompted entirely by the need of telling his story.

Malandain, standing on his door-step, began to laugh as he saw him pass. Why?

He accosted a farmer of Criquetot, who did not let him finish, and, giving him a punch in the pit of his stomach, cried in his face: "Oh you great rogue, go!" Then turned his heel upon him.

Maître Hauchecorne remained speechless, and grew more and more uneasy. Why had they called him "great rogue?"

When seated at table in Jourdain's tavern he began again to explain the whole affair.

A horse-dealer of Montivilliers shouted at him:

"Get out, get out, you old scamp; I know all about your string!"

Hauchecorne stammered:

"But since they found it again, the pocket-book!"

But the other continued:

"Hold your tongue, daddy; there's one who finds it and there's another who returns it. And no one the wiser."

The peasant was choked. He understood at last. They accused him of having had the pocket-book brought back by an accomplice, by a confederate.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, and went away amid a chorus of jeers.

He went home, indignant, choked with rage, with confusion, the more cast down since from his Norman cunning, he was, perhaps, capable of having done what they accused him of, and even of boasting of it as a good trick. His innocence dimly seemed to him impossible to prove, his craftiness being so well known. He felt himself struck to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

He began anew to tell of his adventure, lengthening his recital every day, each time adding new proofs, more energetic declarations, and more sacred oaths which he thought of, which he prepared in his hours of solitude, for his mind was entirely occupied with the story of the string. The more complicated his defence, the more artful his arguments, the less he was believed.

"Those are liars' proofs," they said behind his back.

He felt this, for it preyed upon his heart. He exhausted himself in useless efforts.

He was visibly wasting away.

The jokers now made him tell the story of "The

Piece of String " to amuse them, just as you make a soldier who has been on a campaign tell his story of the battle. His mind kept growing weaker and about the end of December he took to his bed.

He passed away early in January, and, in the ravings of the death-agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

" A little bit of string—a little bit of string—see, here it is, M'sieu' le Maire."

THE MOTHER OF MONSTERS

I RECALLED this horrible story, the events of which occurred long since, and this horrible woman the other day at a select fashionable seaside resort when I saw on the beach a well-known, young, elegant and charming Parisienne adored and respected by everyone.

I had been invited by a friend to pay him a visit in a little provincial town. He took me about in all directions to do the honors of the country, showed me noted scenes, châteaux, industries, ruins. He pointed out monuments, churches, old carved doorways, enormous or distorted trees, the oak of St. Andrew and the yew tree of Boqueboise.

When I had exhausted my admiration and enthusiasm over all the sights of the country-side, my friend said with a distressed expression on his face that there was nothing left to look at. I breathed freely. I would now be able to rest under the shadow of the trees. But, all at once, he uttered an exclamation:

"Oh, yes! We have the Mother of Monsters; I must take you to see her."

"Who is that, the Mother of Monsters?" I asked.

"She is an abominable woman," he replied, "a regular demon, a being who voluntarily brings into the world deformed, hideous, frightful children, monstrosities, in fact, and then sells them to showmen who exhibit such things.

"These exploiters of deformities come from time to time to find out if she has any fresh monstrosity, and if it meets with their approval they carry it away with them, paying the mother a compensation.

"She has eleven freaks of this description. She is rich.

"You think I am joking, that I am romancing, exaggerating. No, my friend; I am telling you the truth, the exact truth.

"Let us go and see this woman. Then I will tell you her history."

He took me into one of the suburbs. The woman lived in a pretty little house by the side of the road. It was attractive and well kept. The garden was filled with fragrant flowers. One might have supposed it was the residence of a retired lawyer.

A maid ushered us into a sort of little country parlor, and the wretch appeared. She was about forty. She was a tall, big woman with hard features, but was well formed, vigorous and healthy, the true type of a robust peasant woman; half animal and half woman.

She knew her reputation and received everyone with a humility that smacked of hatred.

" What do the gentlemen wish? " she asked.

" They tell me that your last child was just like any ordinary child, that he did not resemble his brothers at all," replied my friend. " I wanted to be sure of that. Is it true? "

She cast on us a malicious and furious look as she said:

" Oh, no; oh, no, my poor sir! He is perhaps even uglier than the rest. I have no luck, no luck. They are all like that, my good sir, all like that; it is heartbreaking; how can the good God be so hard on a poor woman who is all alone in the world, how can He? "

She spoke hurriedly, her eyes cast down, with a deprecating air as of a wild beast who is afraid. Her harsh voice became soft and it seemed strange to hear those tearful, falsetto tones issuing from that big, bony frame, of unusual strength, and with coarse outlines, which seemed fitted for vehement action and made to utter howls like a wolf.

" We should like to see your little one," said my friend.

I fancied she blushed—I may have been deceived. After a few moments of silence she said in a louder tone:

" What good will that do you? "

" Why do you not wish to show it to us? " replied my friend. " There are many people to whom you will show it; you know quite well whom I mean."

She gave a start and resuming her natural voice and giving free play to her anger she screamed:

" Was that why you came here? To insult me? Because my children are like animals, tell me? You shall not see him, no, no, you shall not see him. Go

away, go away. I do not know why you all try to torture me like that."

She walked over toward us, her hands on her hips. At the brutal tone of her voice, a sort of moaning, or rather a mewing, the lamentable cry of an idiot, came from the adjoining room. I shivered to the marrow of my bones. We retreated before her.

"Take care, Devil," (they called her the Devil) said my friend, "take care; some day you will get yourself into trouble through this."

She began to tremble, beside herself with fury, shaking her fists, and roaring:

"Be off with you! What will bring me into trouble? Be off with you, miscreants!"

She was about to attack us, but we fled, saddened at what we had seen. When we got outside my friend said:

"Well, you have seen her, what do you think of her?"

"Tell me the story of this brute," I replied.

And this is what he told me as we walked along the white high road with ripe crops on either side of it which rippled like the sea in the light breeze that passed over them.

"This woman was once a servant on a farm; she was an honest girl, steady and economical. She was never known to have an admirer, and never suspected of any frailty. But she went astray, as so many do.

"She soon found herself in trouble and was tortured with fear and shame. Wishing to conceal her misfortune she bound her body tightly with a corset of her own invention, made of boards and

cords. The more she developed the more she bound herself with this instrument of torture, suffering martyrdom, but brave in her sorrow, not allowing anyone to see or suspect anything. She maimed the little unborn being, cramping him with that frightful corset, and made a monster of it. Its head was squeezed and elongated to a point, and its large eyes seemed popping out of its head. Its limbs, exaggeratedly long and twisted like the stalk of a vine, terminated in fingers like the claws of a spider. Its trunk was tiny and round as a nut.

" The child was born in an open field, and when the weeders saw it they fled away screaming, and the report spread that she had given birth to a demon. From that time she was always called the ' Devil.'

" She was driven from the farm and lived on charity, under a shadow. She brought up the monster, whom she hated with a savage hatred and would have strangled, perhaps, if the priest had not threatened her with arrest.

" One day some traveling showmen heard about the frightful creature and asked to see it, so that if it pleased them they might take it away. They were pleased and counted out five hundred francs to the mother. At first she had refused to let them see the little animal, as she was ashamed; but when she discovered that it had a money value, that these people were anxious to get it, she began to bargain with them, raising her price with all a peasant's persistence.

" She made them draw up a paper in which they promised to pay her four hundred francs a year besides, as though they had taken this deformity into their employ.

"Incited by the greed of gain she continued to produce these phenomena, so as to have an assured income like a *bourgeoise*.

"Some of them were long, some short, some like crabs—all bodies—others like lizards. Several died, and she was heartbroken.

"The law tried to intervene, but as they had no proof they let her continue to produce her phenomena. She has at this moment eleven alive and they bring in, on an average, counting good and bad years, from five to six thousand francs a year. One alone is not placed, the one she was unwilling to show us. But she will not keep it long for she is known now to all the showmen in the world, who come from time to time to see if she has anything new.

"She even gets bids from them when the monster is valuable."

My friend was silent. A profound disgust stirred my heart and a feeling of rage, of regret to think that I had not strangled this brute when I had the opportunity.

I had forgotten this story when I saw on the beach of a fashionable resort the other day an elegant, charming, dainty woman, surrounded by men who paid her respect as well as admiration.

I was walking along the beach arm in arm with a friend, the resident physician. Ten minutes later I saw a nursemaid with three children who were rolling in the sand. A pair of little crutches lay on the ground and touched my sympathy. I then noticed that these three children were all deformed, humpbacked, or crooked, and hideous.

"Those are the offspring of that charming woman you saw just now," said the doctor.

I was filled with pity for her, as well as for them, and exclaimed:

"Oh, the poor mother! How can she ever laugh!"

"Do not pity her, my friend. Pity the poor children," replied the doctor. "This is the consequence of preserving a slender figure up to the last. These little deformities are made by the corset. She knows very well that she is risking her life at this game. But what does she care, as long as she can be beautiful and have admirers!"

And then I recalled that other woman, the peasant, the "Devil," who sold her children, her monsters.

FRANCESCA AND CARLOTTA RONDOLI

I SET out to see Italy thoroughly on two occasions, and each time I was stopped at the frontier and could not get any further. So I do not know Italy (said my friend, Charles Jouvent). And yet my two attempts gave me a charming idea of the manners of that beautiful country. Some time, however, I must visit its cities, as well as the museums and works of art with which it abounds. I will make another attempt to penetrate into the interior, which I have not yet succeeded in doing.

You don't understand me, so I will explain: In the spring of 1874 I was seized with an irresistible desire to see Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples. I am, as you know, not a great traveler; it appears to me a useless and fatiguing business. Nights spent in a train, the disturbed slumbers of the railway carriage, with the attendant headache, and stiffness in every limb, the sudden waking in that rolling box, the unwashed feeling, with your eyes and hair full of dust, the smell of the coal on which one's lungs

feed, those bad dinners, in the draughty refreshment rooms are, according to my ideas, a horrible way of beginning a pleasure trip.

After this introduction, we have the miseries of the hotel; of some great hotel full of people, and yet so empty; the strange room and the doubtful bed! I am most particular about my bed; it is the sanctuary of life. We entrust our almost naked and fatigued bodies to it so that they may be reanimated by reposing between soft sheets and feathers.

There we find the most delightful hours of our existence, the hours of love and of sleep. The bed is sacred, and should be respected, venerated, and loved by us as the best and most delightful of our earthly possessions.

I cannot lift up the sheets of a hotel bed without a shudder of disgust. Who has occupied it the night before? Perhaps dirty, revolting people have slept in it. I begin, then, to think of all the horrible people with whom one rubs shoulders every day, people with suspicious-looking skin which makes one think of the feet and all the rest! I call to mind those who carry about with them the sickening smell of garlic or of humanity. I think of those who are deformed and unhealthy, of the perspiration emanating from the sick, and of everything that is ugly and filthy in man.

And all this, perhaps, in the bed in which I am about to sleep! The mere idea of it makes me feel ill as I get into it.

And then the hotel dinners—those dreary *table d'hôte* dinners in the midst of all sorts of extraordinary people, or else those terrible solitary dinners at a small table in a restaurant, feebly lighted by a wretched composite candle under a shade.

Again, those terribly dull evenings in some unknown town! Do you know anything more wretched than the approach of dusk on such an occasion? One goes about as if almost in a dream, looking at faces that one never has seen before and never will see again; listening to people talking about matters which are quite indifferent to you in a language that perhaps you do not understand. You have a horrible feeling, almost as if you were lost, and you continue to walk on so as not to be obliged to return to the hotel, where you would feel more lost still because you are *at home,* in a home which belongs to anyone who can pay for it; and at last you sink into a chair of some well-lighted café, whose gilding and lights oppress you a thousand times more than the shadows in the streets. Then you feel so abominably lonely sitting in front of the glass of flat bock beer that a kind of madness seizes you, the longing to go somewhere or other, no matter where, as long as you need not remain in front of that marble table amid those dazzling lights.

And then, suddenly, you are aware that you are really alone in the world, always and everywhere, and that in places which we know the familiar jostlings give us the illusion only of human fraternity. At such moments of self-abandonment and somber isolation in distant cities one thinks broadly, clearly, and profoundly. Then one suddenly sees the whole of life outside the vision of eternal hope, apart from the deceptions of our innate habits, and of our expectations of happiness, which we indulge in dreams never to be realized.

It is only by going a long distance from home that we can fully understand how short-lived and empty everything near at hand is; by searching for

the unknown we perceive how commonplace and evanescent everything is; only by wandering over the face of the earth can we understand how small the world is, and how very much alike it is everywhere.

How well I know, and how I hate and almost fear, those haphazard walks through unknown streets; and this was the reason why, as nothing would induce me to undertake a tour in Italy by myself, I made up my mind to accompany my friend Paul Pavilly.

You know Paul, and how he idealizes women. To him the earth is habitable only because they are there; the sun gives light and is warm because it shines upon them; the air is soft and balmy because it blows upon their skin and ruffles the soft hair on their temples; and the moon is charming because it makes them dream and imparts a languorous charm to love. Every act and action of Paul's has woman for its motive; all his thoughts, all his efforts and hopes are centered in them.

When I mentioned Italy to Paul he at first absolutely refused to leave Paris. I, however, began to tell him of the adventures I had on my travels. I assured him that all Italian women are charming, and I made him hope for the most refined pleasures at Naples, thanks to certain letters of introduction which I had; and so at last he allowed himself to be persuaded.

II

We took the express one Thursday evening, Paul and I. Hardly anyone goes south at that time of the year, so that we had the carriage to ourselves, and both of us were in a bad temper on leaving

Paris, sorry for having yielded to the temptation of this journey, and regretting Marly, the Seine, and our lazy boating excursions, and all those pleasures in and near Paris which are so dear to every true Parisian.

As soon as the train started Paul stuck himself in his corner, and said, "It is most idiotic to go all that distance," and as it was too late for him to change his mind then, I said, "Well, you should not have come."

He made no answer, and I felt very much inclined to laugh when I saw how furious he looked. He is certainly always rather like a squirrel, but then every one of us has retained the type of some animal or other as the mark of his primitive origin. How many people have jaws like a bull-dog, or heads like goats, rabbits, foxes, horses, or oxen. Paul is a squirrel turned into a man. He has its bright, quick eyes, its hair, its pointed nose, its small, fine, supple, active body, and a certain mysterious resemblance in his general bearing: in fact, a similarity of movement, of gesture, and of bearing which might almost be taken for a recollection.

At last we both went to sleep with that uncomfortable slumber of the railway carriage, which is interrupted by horrible cramps in the arms and neck, and by the sudden stoppages of the train.

We woke up as we were passing beside Rhône. Soon the continued noise of crickets came in through the window, that cry which seems to be the voice of the warm earth, the song of Provence; and seemed to instil into our looks, our breasts, and our souls the light and happy feeling of the South, that odor of the parched earth, of the stony and light soil of the olive with its gray-green foliage.

When the train stopped again a railway guard ran along the train calling out "Valence" in a sonorous voice, with an accent that again gave us a taste of that Provence which the shrill note of the crickets had already imparted to us.

Nothing fresh happened till we reached Marseilles, where we alighted for breakfast, but when we returned to our carriage we found a woman installed there.

Paul, with a delighted glance at me, gave his short mustache a mechanical twirl, and passed his fingers through his hair, which had become slightly out of order with the night's journey. Then he sat down opposite the new-comer.

Whenever I happen to see a striking new face, either in traveling or in society, I always have the strongest inclination to find out what character, mind, and intellectual capacities are hidden beneath those features.

She was a young and pretty woman, certainly a native of the south of France, with splendid eyes, beautiful wavy black hair, which was so thick, long, and strong that it seemed almost too heavy for her head. She was dressed with a certain southern bad taste which made her look a little vulgar. Her regular features had none of the grace and finish of the refined races, of that slight delicacy which members of the aristocracy inherit from their birth, and which is the hereditary mark of thinner blood.

Her bracelets were too big to be of gold; she wore earrings with large white stones that were certainly not diamonds, and she belonged unmistakably to the commonalty. One would have guessed that she would talk too loud, and shout on every occasion with exaggerated gestures.

When the train started she remained motionless in her place, in the attitude of a woman who was indignant, without even looking at us.

Paul began to talk to me, evidently with an eye to effect, trying to attract her attention, as shopkeepers expose their choice wares to catch the notice of passers-by.

She, however, did not appear to be paying the least attention.

"Toulon! Ten minutes to wait! Refreshment room!" the porters shouted.

Paul motioned to me to get out, and as soon as we had done so, he said:

"I wonder who on earth she can be?"

I began to laugh. "I am sure I don't know, and I don't in the least care."

He was quite excited.

"She is an uncommonly fresh and pretty girl. What eyes she has, and how cross she looks! She must have been dreadfully worried, for she takes no notice of anything."

"You will have all your trouble for nothing," I growled.

He began to lose his temper.

"I am not taking any trouble, my dear fellow. I think her an extremely pretty woman, that is all. If one could only speak to her! But I don't know how to begin. Cannot you give me an idea? Can't you guess who she is?"

"Upon my word, I cannot. However, I should rather think she is some strolling actress who is going to rejoin her company after a love adventure."

He seemed quite upset, as if I had said something insulting.

"What makes you think that? On the contrary, I think she looks most respectable."

"Just look at her bracelets," I said, "her earrings and her whole dress. I should not be the least surprised if she were a dancer or a circus rider, but most likely a dancer. Her whole style smacks very much of the theater."

He evidently did not like the idea.

"She is much too young, I am sure; why, she is hardly twenty."

"Well," I replied, "there are many things which one can do before one is twenty; dancing and elocution are among them."

"Take your seats for Nice, Vintimiglia," the guards and porters called.

We got in; our fellow passenger was eating an orange, and certainly she did not do it elegantly. She had spread her pocket handkerchief on her knees, and the way in which she tore off the peel and opened her mouth to put in the pieces, and then spat the pips out of the open window, showed that her early training and habits certainly had been decidedly vulgar.

She seemed, also, more put out than ever, and swallowed the fruit with an exceedingly comic air of rage.

Paul devoured her with his eyes, and tried to attract her attention and excite her curiosity; but in spite of his talk, and of the manner in which he brought in well-known names, she did not pay the least attention to him.

After passing Fréjus and St. Raphael, the train passed through a veritable garden, a paradise of roses, and groves of oranges and lemons covered with fruit and flowers at the same time. That de-

lightful coast from Marseilles to Genoa is a kingdom of perfumes in a home of flowers.

June is the time to see it in all its beauty, when in every narrow valley and on every slope, the most exquisite flowers are growing luxuriantly. And the roses! fields, hedges, groves of roses. They climb up the walls, blossom on the roofs, hang from the trees, peep out from amongst the bushes; they are white, red, yellow, large and small, single, with a simple self-colored dress, or full and heavy in brilliant toilettes.

Their breath makes the air heavy and relaxing, and the still more penetrating odor of the orange blossoms sweetens the atmosphere till it might almost be called the refinement of odor.

The shore, with its brown rocks, was bathed by the motionless Mediterranean. The hot summer sun stretched like a fiery cloth over the mountains, over the long expanses of sand, and over the motionless, apparently solid blue sea. The train went on through the tunnels, along the slopes, above the water, on straight, wall-like viaducts, and a soft, vague, saltish smell, a smell of drying seaweed, mingled at times with the strong, heavy perfume of the flowers.

But Paul neither saw, looked at, nor smelled anything, for our fellow traveler engrossed all his attention.

When we reached Cannes, as he wished to speak to me he signed to me to get out, and as soon as I did so he took me by the arm.

"Do you know, she is really charming. Just look at her eyes; and I never saw anything like her hair."

"Don't excite yourself," I replied, "or else ad-

dress her, if you have any intentions that way. She does not look unapproachable, I fancy, although she appears to be a little bit grumpy."

"Why don't you speak to her?" he said.

"I don't know what to say, for I am always terribly stupid at first; I can never make advances to a woman in the street. I follow them, go round and round them, and quite close to them, but never know what to say at first. I only once tried to enter into conversation with a woman in that way. As I clearly saw that she was waiting for me to make overtures, and as I felt bound to say something, I stammered out, 'I hope you are quite well, Madame?' She laughed in my face, and I made my escape."

I promised Paul to do all I could to bring about a conversation, and when we had taken our places again, I politely asked our neighbor:

"Have you any objection to the smell of tobacco, Madame?"

She merely replied, "*Non capisco.*"

So she was an Italian! I felt an absurd inclination to laugh. As Paul did not understand a word of that language, I was obliged to act as his interpreter, so I said in Italian:

"I asked you, Madame, whether you had any objection to tobacco smoke?"

With an angry look she replied, "*Che mi fa?*"

She had neither turned her head nor looked at me, and I really did not know whether to take this "What does it matter to me" for an authorization, a refusal, a real sign of indifference, or for a mere "Let me alone."

"Madame," I replied, "if you mind the smell of tobacco in the least——"

She again said, "*Mica,*" in a tone which seemed

to mean, "I wish to goodness you would leave me alone!" It was, however, a kind of permission, so I said to Paul:

"You may smoke."

He looked at me in that curious sort of way that people have when they try to understand others who are talking in a strange language before them, and asked me:

"What did you say to her?"

"I asked whether we might smoke, and she said we might do whatever we liked."

Whereupon I lighted my cigar.

"Did she not say anything more?"

"If you had counted her words you would have noticed that she used exactly six, two of which gave me to understand that she knew no French, so four remained, and much can be said in four words."

Paul seemed quite unhappy, disappointed, and at sea, so to speak.

But suddenly the Italian asked me, in that tone of discontent which seemed habitual to her, "Do you know at what time we shall get to Genoa?"

"At eleven o'clock," I replied. Then after a moment I went on:

"My friend and I are also going to Genoa, and if we can be of any service to you, we shall be very happy, as you are quite alone." But she interrupted with such a "*Mica!*" that I did not venture on another word.

"What did she say?" Paul asked.

"She said she thought you were charming."

But he was in no humor for joking, and begged me dryly not to make fun of him; so I translated her question and my polite offer, which had been so rudely rejected.

Then he really became as restless as a caged squirrel.

"If we only knew," he said, "what hotel she was going to, we would go to the same. Try to find out, so as to have another opportunity to make her talk."

It was not particularly easy, and I did not know what pretext to invent, desirous as I was to make the acquaintance of this unapproachable person.

We passed Nice, Monaco, Mentone, and the train stopped at the frontier for the examination of luggage.

Although I hate those ill-bred people who breakfast and dine in railway-carriages, I went and bought a quantity of good things to make one last attack on her by their means. I felt sure that this girl must, ordinarily, be by no means inaccessible. Something had put her out and made her irritable, but very little would suffice, a mere word or some agreeable offer, to decide her and vanquish her.

We started again, and we three were still alone. I spread my eatables on the seat. I cut up the fowl, put the slices of ham neatly on a piece of paper, and then carefully laid out our dessert, strawberries, plums, cherries, and cakes, close to the girl.

When she saw that we were about to eat she took a piece of chocolate and two little crisp cakes out of her pocket and began to munch them.

"Ask her to have some of ours," Paul said in a whisper.

"That is exactly what I wish to do, but it is rather a difficult matter."

As she, however, glanced from time to time at our provisions, I felt sure that she would still be hungry when she had finished what she had with her;

so, as soon as her frugal meal was over, I said to her:

"It would be very kind of you if you would take some of this fruit."

Again she said "*Mica!*" but less crossly than before.

"Well, then," I said, "may I offer you a little wine? I see you have not drunk anything. It is Italian wine, and as we are now in your own country, we should be very pleased to see such a pretty Italian mouth accept the offer of its French neighbors."

She shook her head slightly, evidently wishing to refuse, but very desirous of accepting, and her *mica* this time was almost polite. I took the flask, which was covered with straw in the Italian fashion, and filling the glass I offered it to her.

"Please drink it," I said, "to bid us welcome to your country."

She took the glass with her usual look, and emptied it at a draught, like a woman consumed with thirst, and then gave it back to me without even saying "Thank you."

I then offered her the cherries. "Please take some," I said; "we shall be so delighted if you will."

Out of her corner she looked at all the fruit spread out beside her, and said so rapidly that I could scarcely follow her: "*A me non piacciono ne le ciriegie ne le susine; amo soltano le fragole.*"

"What does she say?" Paul asked.

"That she does not care for cherries or plums, but only for strawberries."

I put a newspaper full of wild strawberries on her lap, and she ate them quickly, tossing them into

her mouth from some distance in a coquettish and charming manner.

When she had finished the little red heap, which soon disappeared under the rapid action of her hands, I asked her:

"What may I offer you now?"

"I will take a little chicken," she replied.

She certainly devoured half of it, tearing it to pieces with the rapid movements of her jaws like some carnivorous animal. Then she made up her mind to have some cherries, which she "did not like," and then some plums, then some little cakes. Then she said, "I have had enough," and sat back in her corner.

I was much amused, and tried to make her eat more, insisting, in fact, till she suddenly flew into a rage, and flung such a furious *mica* at me, that I would no longer run the risk of spoiling her digestion.

I turned to my friend. "My poor Paul," I said, "I am very much afraid we have had our trouble for nothing."

The night came on, one of those hot summer nights which extend their warm shade over the burning and exhausted earth. Here and there, in the distance, by the sea, on capes and promontories, bright stars, which I was, at times, almost inclined to confound with lighthouses, began to shine on the dark horizon.

The scent of the orange trees became more penetrating, and we breathed with delight, distending our lungs to inhale it more deeply. The balmy air was soft, delicious, almost divine.

Suddenly I noticed something like a shower of stars under the dense shade of the trees along the

line, where it was quite dark. It might have been taken for drops of light, leaping, flying, playing and running amongst the leaves, or for small stars fallen from the skies in order to have an excursion on the earth; but they were only fireflies dancing a strange fiery ballet in the perfumed air.

One of them happened to come into our carriage, and shed its intermittent light, which seemed to be extinguished one moment and to be burning the next. I covered the carriage-lamp with its blue shade and watched the strange fly careering about in its fiery flight. Suddenly it settled on the dark hair of our neighbor, who was half dozing after dinner. Paul seemed delighted, with his eyes fixed on the bright, sparkling spot, which looked like a living jewel on the forehead of the sleeping woman.

The Italian woke up about eleven o'clock, with the bright insect still in her hair. When I saw her move, I said: "We are just getting to Genoa, Madame," and she murmured, without answering me, as if possessed by some obstinate and embarrassing thought:

"What am I going to do, I wonder?"

And then she suddenly asked:

"Would you like me to come with you?"

I was so taken aback that I really did not understand her.

"With us? How do you mean?"

She repeated, looking more and more furious:

"Would you like me to be your guide now, as soon as we get out of the train?"

"I am quite willing; but where do you want to go?"

She shrugged her shoulders with an air of supreme indifference.

"Wherever you like; what does it matter to me?" She repeated her "*Che mi fa?*" twice.

"But we are going to the hotel."

"Very well, let us all go to the hotel," she said, in a contemptuous voice.

I turned to Paul, and said:

"She wishes to know whether we should like her to come with us."

My friend's utter surprise restored my self-possession. He stammered:

"With us? Where to? What for? How?"

"I don't know, but she made this strange proposal to me in a most irritated voice. I told her that we were going to the hotel, and she said: 'Very well, let us all go there!' I suppose she is without a penny. She certainly has a very strange way of making acquaintances."

Paul, who was very much excited, exclaimed:

"I am quite agreeable. Tell her that we will go wherever she likes." Then, after a moment's hesitation, he said uneasily:

"We must know, however, with whom she wishes to go—with you or with me?"

I turned to the Italian, who did not even seem to be listening to us, and said:

"We shall be very happy to have you with us, but my friend wishes to know whether you will take my arm or his?"

She opened her black eyes wide with vague surprise, and said, "*Che mi fa?*"

I was obliged to explain myself. "In Italy, I believe, when a man looks after a woman, fulfils all her wishes, and satisfies all her caprices, he is called a *patito*. Which of us two will you take for your *patito*?"

Without the slightest hesitation she replied:

"You!"

I turned to Paul. "You see, my friend, she chooses me; you have no chance."

"All the better for you," he replied, in a rage. Then, after thinking for a few moments, he went on:

"Do you really care about taking this creature with you? She will spoil our journey. What are we to do with this woman, who looks like I don't know what? They will not take us in at any decent hotel."

I, however, just began to find the Italian much nicer than I had thought her at first, and I was now very desirous to take her with us. The idea delighted me.

I replied, "My dear fellow, we have accepted, and it is too late to recede. You were the first to advise me to say 'Yes.'"

"It is very stupid," he growled, "but do as you please."

The train whistled, slackened speed, and we ran into the station.

I got out of the carriage, and offered my new companion my hand. She jumped out lightly, and I gave her my arm, which she took with an air of seeming repugnance. As soon as we had claimed our luggage we set off into the town, Paul walking in utter silence.

"To what hotel shall we go?" I asked him. "It may be difficult to get into the Ville de Paris with a woman, especially with this Italian."

Paul interrupted me. "Yes, with an Italian who looks more like a strumpet than a duchess. However, that is no business of mine. Do just as you please."

I was in a state of perplexity. I had written to the Ville de Paris to retain our rooms, and now I did not know what to do.

Two commissionaires followed us with our luggage. I continued: "You might as well go on first, and say that we are coming; and give the landlord to understand that I have a—a friend with me and that we should like rooms quite by themselves for us three, so as not to be brought in contact with other travelers. He will understand, and we will decide according to his answer."

But Paul growled, "Thank you, such commissions and such parts do not suit me, by any means. I did not come here to prepare your apartments or to minister to your pleasures."

But I was urgent: "Look here, don't be angry. It is surely far better to go to a good hotel than to a bad one, and it is not difficult to ask the landlord for three separate bedrooms as well as a dining-room."

I put a stress on *three,* and that decided him.

He went on first, and I saw him go into a large hotel while I remained on the other side of the street, leading along my fair Italian, who did not say a word, and followed by the porters with the luggage.

Paul came back at last, looking as dissatisfied as my companion.

"That is settled," he said, "and they will take us in; but there are only two bedrooms. You must settle it as you can."

I followed him, rather ashamed of going in with such a strange companion.

There were two bedrooms separated by a small sitting-room. I ordered a cold supper, and then I turned to the Italian with a perplexed look.

"We have only been able to get two rooms, so you must choose which you like."

She replied with her eternal "*Che mi fa?*" I thereupon took up her little black wooden trunk, such as servants use, and took it into the room on the right, which I had chosen for her—for us. A bit of paper was fastened to the box, on which was plainly written, *Mademoiselle Francesca Rondoli, Genoa.*

"Your name is Francesca?" I asked, and she nodded her head, without replying.

"We shall have supper directly," I continued. "Meanwhile, I daresay you would like to arrange your toilette a little?"

She answered with a *mica,* a word which she employed just as frequently as *Che mi fa,* but I went on: "It is always pleasant after a journey."

Then I suddenly remembered that she had not, perhaps, the necessary requisites, for she appeared to me in a very singular position, as if she had just escaped from some disagreeable adventure, and I brought her my dressing-case.

I put out all the little instruments for cleanliness and comfort which it contained: a nail-brush, a new toothbrush—I always carry a selection of them about with me—my nail-scissors, a nail-file, and sponges. I uncorked a bottle of eau de cologne, one of lavender-water, and a little bottle of new-mown hay, so that she might have a choice. Then I opened my powder-box, and put out the powder-puff, placed my fine towels over the water-jug, and a piece of new soap near the basin.

She watched my movements with a look of annoyance in her wide-open eyes, without appearing either astonished or pleased at my forethought.

"Here is all that you require," I then said; "I will tell you when supper is ready."

When I returned to the sitting-room I found that Paul had taken possession of the other room, and had shut himself in, so I sat down to wait.

A waiter went to and fro, bringing plates and glasses. He laid the table slowly, then put a cold chicken on it, and told me that all was ready.

I knocked gently at Mademoiselle Rondoli's door. "Come in," she said, and when I did so I was struck by a strong, heavy smell of perfumes, as if I were in a hairdresser's and perfumer's shop.

The Italian was sitting on her trunk in an attitude either of thoughtful discontent or absent-mindedness. The towel was still folded over the water-jug that was full of water, and the soap, untouched and dry, was lying beside the empty basin; but one would have thought that the young woman had drunk half the contents of the bottles of perfume. The eau de cologne, however, had been spared, as only about a third of it had gone; but to make up for that she had used a surprising amount of lavender-water and new-mown hay. A cloud of violet-powder, a vague white mist, seemed still to be floating in the air, from the effects of her over-powdering her face and neck. It seemed to cover her eyelashes, eyebrows, and the hair on her temples like snow, while her cheeks were plastered with it, and layers of it covered her nostrils, the corners of her eyes, and her chin.

When she got up she exhaled such a strong odor of mingled perfume that it almost made me feel faint.

When we sat down to supper, I found that Paul was in a most execrable temper, and I could get

nothing out of him but blame, irritable words, and disagreeable remarks.

Mademoiselle Francesca ate like an ogre, and as soon as she had finished her meal she threw herself upon the sofa in the sitting-room. Sitting down beside her, I said gallantly, kissing her hand:

"Shall I have the bed prepared, or will you sleep on the couch?"

"It is all the same to me. *Che mi fa?*"

Her indifference vexed me.

"Should you like to retire at once?"

"Yes; I am very sleepy."

She got up, yawned, gave her hand to Paul, who took it with a furious look, and I lighted her into the bedroom. A disquieting feeling haunted me. "Here is all you want," I said again.

This time I took care to pour half the water into the basin, and to put a towel near the soap.

Then I went back to Paul. As soon as I got into the room, he said, "You have got a nice sort of camel there!" and I answered, laughing, "My dear boy, don't speak ill of sour grapes," and he replied, ill-temperedly:

"Just take care how this ends, old man."

I almost trembled with that feeling of fear which assails us after some suspicious love escapade—that fear which spoils our pleasant meetings, our unexpected caresses, our chance kisses. However, I put a bold face on the matter. "At any rate, the girl is no adventuress."

But Paul had me in his power; he had seen the shadow of anxiety on my face.

"What do you know about her? You really astonish me. You fall in with an Italian woman traveling alone, and she volunteers, with most singular

cynicism, to accompany us; you take her to the first hotel you come to, and then you declare that she is not a ——! And you persuade yourself that you are not running more risk than if you were to go and spend the night with a woman who had small-pox."

He laughed, an unpleasant and angry laugh. I sat down, a prey to uneasiness. What was I to do, for he was right, after all?

He went on: "Do as you like, I have warned you, so do not complain of the consequences."

But I saw an ironical gayety in his eyes, a delight in his revenge, and he made fun of me so jovially that I did not hesitate any longer. I gave him my hand, and said, "Good night. You know the old saying: 'A victory without peril is a triumph without glory,' and upon my word, the victory is worth the danger."

And with a firm step I left him for the night.

I stopped short before the half-open door of Francesca's room in utter astonishment. She was already asleep. Weariness had overcome her as she finished undressing, and she was reposing in the charming attitude of one of Titian's women.

It seemed as if she had lain down from sheer fatigue in order to take off her stockings, for they were lying on the bed. Then she had thought of something pleasant, no doubt, for she had waited to finish her reverie before moving, and then, closing her eyes, had lost consciousness. A nightgown, embroidered about the neck such as one buys in cheap ready-made shops, was lying on a chair.

She was charming, young, firm and fresh.

There is nothing prettier than a pretty woman asleep, and in a moment, seeing her thus in all her

native charms, I was about to forget my friend's prudent counsels; but, suddenly turning to the dressing-table, I saw everything in the same state as I had left it, and I sat down, anxious, and a prey to irresolution.

I remained thus for a long time, not able to make up my mind what to do.

I had no thought of sleeping, for my head was too excited and my eyes too occupied.

I moved about without stopping, feverish, uncomfortable, nervous. Then I began to reason with myself, certainly with a view to capitulation.

I undressed slowly, and then stretched myself out against the wall, turning my back firmly on temptation.

In this position I remained for a long time without going to sleep, when suddenly my neighbor woke up. She opened her eyes with astonishment, and still with that discontented look in them; then, perceiving that she was undressed, she got up, and calmly put on her night-dress with as much indifference as if I had not been present.

Then, not troubling herself at all about me, she immediately went quietly to sleep again, with her head resting on her right arm.

As for me, I began to meditate on human weakness and fatuity, and then I went to sleep also.

She got up early, like a woman who is accustomed to work. She woke me by doing so, and I watched her through my half-closed eyelids.

She came and went without hurrying herself, as if she were astonished at having nothing to do. At length she went to the dressing-table, and in a moment emptied all my bottles of perfume. She certainly also used some water, but very little.

When she was quite dressed, she sat down on her trunk again, and clasping one knee between her hands, she seemed to be thinking.

At that moment I pretended to first notice her, and said:

"Good morning, Francesca."

Without seeming in at all a better temper than the previous night, she murmured, "Good morning."

When I asked her whether she had slept well, she nodded her head, and jumping out of bed I went and kissed her.

She turned her face toward me like a child who is being kissed against its will; but I took her tenderly in my arms, and gently pressed my lips on her eyelids, which she closed with evident distaste under my kisses on her fresh cheeks and full lips, which she turned away.

"You don't seem to like being kissed," I said to her.

"*Mica!*" was her only answer.

I sat down on the trunk by her side, and passing my arm through hers, I said: "*Mica! mica! mica!* in reply to everything. I shall call you Mademoiselle *Mica,* I think."

For the first time I fancied that I saw the shadow of a smile on her lips, but it passed by so quickly that I may have been mistaken.

"But if you never say anything but *Mica* I shall not know what to do to please you. Let us see; what shall we do to-day?"

She hesitated a moment, as if some fancy had flitted through her head, and then she said carelessly: "It is all the same to me; whatever you like."

"Very well, Mademoiselle *Mica,* we will have a carriage and go for a drive."

"As you please," she said.

Paul was waiting for us in the dining-room, looking as bored as third parties usually do in love affairs. I assumed a delighted air, and shook hands with him with triumphant energy.

"What are you thinking of doing?" he asked.

"First of all, we will go and see a little of the town, and then we might get a carriage and take a drive in the neighborhood."

We breakfasted almost in silence and then set out. I dragged Francesca from palace to palace, and she either looked at nothing or merely glanced carelessly at the various masterpieces. Paul followed us, growling all sorts of disagreeable things. Then we all three took a drive in silence into the country and returned to dinner.

The next day it was the same thing and the next day again; and on the third Paul said to me: "Look here, I am going to leave you; I am not going to stop here for three weeks watching you make love to this creature."

I was perplexed and annoyed, for to my great surprise I had become singularly attached to Francesca. A man is but weak and foolish, carried away by the merest trifle, and a coward every time that his senses are excited or mastered. I clung to this unknown girl, silent and dissatisfied as she always was. I liked her somewhat ill-tempered face, the dissatisfied droop of her mouth, the weariness of her look; I liked her fatigued movements, the contemptuous way in which she let me kiss her, the very indifference of her caresses. A secret bond, that mysterious bond of physical love, which does not

satisfy, bound me to her. I told Paul so, quite frankly. He treated me as if I were a fool, and then said:

"Very well, take her with you."

But she obstinately refused to leave Genoa, without giving any reason. I besought, I reasoned, I promised, but all was of no avail, and so I stayed on.

Paul declared that he would go by himself, and went so far as to pack up his portmanteau; but he remained all the same.

Thus a fortnight passed. Francesca was always silent and irritable, lived beside me rather than with me, responded to all my requirements and all my propositions with her perpetual *Che mi fa,* or with her no less perpetual *Mica.*

My friend became more and more furious, but my only answer was, "You can go if you are tired of staying. I am not detaining you."

Then he called me names, overwhelmed me with reproaches, and exclaimed: "Where do you think I can go now? We had three weeks at our disposal and here is a fortnight gone! I cannot continue my journey now; and, in any case, I am not going to Venice, Florence, and Rome all by myself. But you will pay for it, and more dearly than you think, most likely. You are not going to bring a man all the way from Paris in order to shut him up at a hotel in Genoa with an Italian adventuress."

When I told him, very calmly, to return to Paris he exclaimed that he intended to do so the very next day; but the next day he was still there, still in a rage and swearing.

By this time we began to be known in the streets through which we wandered from morning till night. Sometimes French people would turn round astonished

ished at meeting their fellow-countrymen in the company of this girl with her striking costume, who looked singularly out of place, not to say compromising, beside us.

She used to walk along, leaning on my arm, without looking at anything. Why did she remain with me, with us, who seemed to do so little to amuse her? Who was she? Where did she come from? What was she doing? Had she any plan or idea? Where did she live? As an adventuress, or by chance meetings? I tried in vain to find out and to explain it. The better I knew her the more enigmatical she became. She seemed to be a girl of poor family who had been taken away, and then cast aside and lost. What did she think would become of her, or whom was she waiting for? She certainly did not appear to be trying to make a conquest of me, or to make any real profit out of me.

I tried to question her, to speak to her of her childhood and family; but she never gave me an answer. I stayed with her, my heart unfettered and my senses enchained, never wearied of holding her in my arms, that proud and quarrelsome woman, captivated by my senses, or rather carried away, overcome by a youthful, healthy, powerful charm, which emanated from her fragrant person and from the well-molded lines of her body.

Another week passed, and the term of my journey was drawing on, for I had to be back in Paris by the eleventh of July. By this time Paul had come to take his part in the adventure, though still grumbling at me, while I invented pleasures, distractions, and excursions to amuse Francesca and my friend; and in order to do this I gave myself a great amount of trouble.

One day I proposed an excursion to Sta. Margarita, that charming little town in the midst of gardens, hidden at the foot of a slope which stretches far into the sea up to the village of Portofino. We three walked along the excellent road which goes along the foot of the mountain. Suddenly Francesca said to me: "I shall not be able to go with you to-morrow; I must go and see some of my relatives."

That was all; I did not ask her any questions, as I was quite sure she would not answer me.

The next morning she got up very early. When she spoke to me it was in a constrained and hesitating voice:

"If I do not come back again, shall you come and fetch me?"

"Most certainly I shall," was my reply. "Where must I go to find you?"

Then she explained: "You must go into the Street Victor-Emmanuel, down the Passage Falene, and into the furniture shop at the bottom, in a court, and there you must ask for Madame Rondoli.—That is the place."

And so she went away, leaving me rather astonished.

When Paul saw that I was alone, he stammered out: "Where is Francesca?" And when I told him what had happened he exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, let us make use of our opportunity, and bolt; as it is, our time is up. Two days, more or less, make no difference. Let us go at once; go and pack up your things. Off we go!"

But I refused. I could not, as I told him, leave the girl in such a manner, after living with her for nearly three weeks. At any rate, I ought to say

good-by to her, and make her accept a present; I certainly had no intention of behaving badly to her.

But he would not listen; he pressed and worried me, but I would not give way.

I remained indoors for several hours, expecting Francesca's return, but she did not come, and at last, at dinner, Paul said with a triumphant air: "She has thrown you over, my dear fellow; it is certainly very strange."

I must acknowledge that I was surprised and rather vexed. He laughed in my face, and made fun of me.

"It is not exactly a bad way of getting rid of you, though rather primitive. 'Just wait for me, I shall be back in a moment,' they often say. How long are you going to wait? I should not wonder if you were foolish enough to go and look for her at the address she gave you. 'Does Madame Rondoli live here, please?' 'No, Monsieur.' I'll bet that you are longing to go there."

"Not in the least," I protested, "and I assure you that if she does not come back to-morrow morning I shall leave by the express at eight o'clock. I shall have waited twenty-four hours, and that is enough; my conscience will be quite clear."

I spent an uneasy and unpleasant evening, for I really had at heart a very tender feeling for her. I went to bed at twelve o'clock, and hardly slept at all. I got up at six, called Paul, packed up my things, and two hours later we set out for France together.

III

The next year, at just about the same period, I was seized as one is with a periodical fever, with a

new desire to go to Italy, and I immediately made up my mind to carry it into effect. There is no doubt that every really well-educated man ought to see Florence, Venice, and Rome. This travel has, also, the additional advantage of providing many subjects of conversation in society, and of giving one an opportunity for bringing forward artistic generalities which appear profound.

This time I went alone, and I arrived at Genoa at the same time as the year before, but without any adventure on the road. I went to the same hotel, and actually happened to have the same room.

I was hardly in bed when the recollection of Francesca which, since the evening before, had been floating vaguely through my mind, haunted me with strange persistency. I thought of her nearly the whole night, and by degrees the wish to see her again seized me, a confused desire at first, which gradually grew stronger and more intense. At last I made up my mind to spend the next day in Genoa to try to find her, and if I should not succeed, to take the evening train.

Early in the morning I set out on my search. I remembered the directions she had given me when she left me, perfectly—Victor-Emmanuel Street, house of the furniture-dealer, at the bottom of the yard on the right.

I found it without the least difficulty, and I knocked at the door of a somewhat dilapidated-looking dwelling. It was opened by a stout woman, who must have been very handsome, but who actually was only very dirty. Although she had too much *embonpoint,* she still bore the lines of majestic beauty; her untidy hair fell over her forehead and shoulders, and one fancied one could see her floating

about in an enormous dressing-gown covered with spots of dirt and grease. Round her neck she wore a great gilt necklace, and on her wrists were splendid bracelets of Genoa filigree work.

In rather a hostile manner she asked me what I wanted, and I replied by requesting her to tell me whether Francesca Rondoli lived there.

"What do you want with her?" she asked.

"I had the pleasure of meeting her last year, and I should like to see her again."

The old woman looked at me suspiciously.

"Where did you meet her?" she asked.

"Why, here in Genoa itself."

"What is your name?"

I hesitated a moment, and then I told her. I had hardly done so when the Italian put out her arms as if to embrace me. "Oh! you are the Frenchman; how glad I am to see you! But what grief you caused the poor child! She waited for you a month; yes, a whole month. At first she thought you would come to fetch her. She wanted to see whether you loved her. If you only knew how she cried when she saw that you were not coming! She cried till she seemed to have no tears left. Then she went to the hotel, but you had gone. She thought that most likely you were traveling in Italy, and that you would return by Genoa to fetch her, as she would not go with you. And she waited more than a month, Monsieur; and she was so unhappy; so unhappy. I am her mother."

I really felt a little disconcerted, but I regained my self-possession, and asked:

"Where is she now?"

"She has gone to Paris with a painter, a delightful man, who loves her very much, and who gives

her everything that she wants. Just look at what she sent me; they are very pretty, are they not? ''

And she showed me, with quite southern animation, her heavy bracelets and necklace. '' I have also,'' she continued, '' earrings with stones in them, a silk dress, and some rings; but I only wear them on grand occasions. Oh! she is very happy, Monsieur, very happy. She will be so pleased when I tell her you have been here. But pray come in and sit down. You will take something or other, surely?''

But I refused, as I now wished to get away by the first train; but she took me by the arm and pulled me in, saying:

'' Please, come in; I must tell her that you have been in here.''

I found myself in a small, rather dark room, furnished with only a table and a few chairs.

She continued: '' Oh, she is very happy now, very happy. When you met her in the train she was very miserable; she had had an unfortunate love affair at Marseilles, and she was coming home, poor child. But she liked you at once, though she was still rather sad, you understand. Now she has all she wants, and she writes and tells me everything that she does. His name is Bellemin, and they say he is a great painter in your country. He fell in love with her at first sight. But you will take a glass of sirup?—it is very good. Are you quite alone, this year? ''

'' Yes,'' I said, '' quite alone.''

I felt an increasing inclination to laugh, as my first disappointment was dispelled by what Mother Rondoli said. I was obliged, however, to drink a glass of her sirup.

"So you are quite alone?" she continued. "How sorry I am that Francesca is not here now; she would have been company for you all the time you stayed. It is not very amusing to go about all by oneself, and she will be very sorry also."

Then, as I was getting up to go, she exclaimed:

"But would you not like Carlotta to go with you? She knows all the walks very well. She is my second daughter, Monsieur."

No doubt she took my look of surprise for consent, for she opened the inner door and called out up the dark stairs which I could not see:

"Carlotta! Carlotta! make haste down, my dear child."

I tried to protest, but she would not listen.

"No; she will be very glad to go with you; she is very nice, and much more cheerful than her sister,

and she is a good girl, a very good girl, whom I love very much."

In a few moments a tall, slender, dark girl appeared, her hair hanging down, and her youthful figure showing unmistakably beneath an old dress of her mother's.

The latter at once told her how matters stood.

"This is Francesca's Frenchman, you know, the one whom she knew last year. He is quite alone, and has come to look for her, poor fellow; so I told him that you would go with him to keep him company."

The girl looked at me with her handsome dark eyes, and said, smiling:

"I have no objection, if he wishes it."

I could not possibly refuse, and merely said:

"Of course I shall be very glad of your company."

Her mother pushed her out. "Go and get dressed directly; put on your blue dress and your hat with the flowers, and make haste."

As soon as she had left the room the old woman explained herself: "I have two others, but they are much younger. It costs a lot of money to bring up four children. Luckily the eldest is off my hands at present."

Then she told all about herself, about her husband, who had been an employé on the railway, but who was dead, and she expatiated on the good qualities of Carlotta, her second girl, who soon returned, dressed, as her sister had been, in a striking, peculiar manner.

Her mother examined her from head to foot, and, after finding everything right, she said:

"Now, my children, you can go." Then turn-

ing to the girl, she said: "Be sure you are back by ten o'clock to-night; you know the door is locked then." The answer was:

"All right, mamma; don't alarm yourself."

She took my arm and we went wandering about the streets, just as I had wandered the previous year with her sister.

We returned to the hotel for lunch, and then I took my new friend to Santa Margarita, just as I had taken her sister the year previously.

During the whole fortnight which I had at my disposal I took Carlotta to all the places of interest in and about Genoa. She gave me no cause to regret her sister.

She cried when I left her, and the morning of my departure I gave her four bracelets for her mother, besides a substantial token of my affection for herself.

One of these days I intend to return to Italy, and I cannot help remembering with a certain amount of uneasiness, mingled with hope, that Madame Rondoli has two more daughters.